

System of Divinity,

I N

A COURSE of SERMONS

O N T H E

Being, Nature, and Attributes of God ;

On some of the most important ARTICLES of

The Christian Religion, in Connection ;

A N D

On the several VIRTUES and VICES of MANKIND.

I n S I X V O L U M E S.

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MORETONHAMPSTEAD, DEVON.

V O L. V.

E X E T E R :

**Printed for the Author by R. TREWMAN ; sold also by G. and
T. WILKIE, St. Paul's Church-yard, London, and all other
Booksellers in Town and Country. M,DCC,LXXXVI.**

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System of Divinity

A COURSE OF SERMONS

OF THE

Scriptures and Principles of God

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CONTENTS of VOL. V.

	Page
S E R M O N L X I X.	
Of the Evil of Anxiety.	
MATT. vi. 34. "Take no Thought for the Morrow."	1
S E R M O N L X X.	
Of Trust in God, in Opposition to Anxiety.	
ISAIAH xxvi. 4. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever."	14
S E R M O N L X X I.	
Against Covetousness.	
HABBAKUK ii. 9. "Woe to him that coveteth an "evil Covetousness."	25
S E R M O N L X X I I.	
Mediocrity, in Opposition to Covetousness.	
PROV. xxx. 8. "Give me neither Poverty nor "Riches; feed me with Food convenient for me."	39
S E R M O N L X X I I I.	
Of the Evil of Ambition.	
JEREMIAH xlv. 5. "Seekest thou great Things for "thyself? Seek them not."	50
S E R M O N L X X I V.	
Lowliness of Mind, in Opposition to Ambition.	
MATT. v. 3. "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."	65
A 2	SERMON

iv C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N LXXV.

Sin of immoderate Self-Love.

II. TIM. iii. 2. "*Lovers of their own selves.*" - 76

S E R M O N LXXVI.

General Benevolence, in Opposition to Selfishness.

GAL. vi. 10. "*Do good unto all Men.*" - 87

S E R M O N LXXVII.

Of the Sin of Withholding.

PROV. xi. 26, "*He that withholdeth, the People
shall curse him.*" - - - - 114

S E R M O N LXXVIII.

The great Duty of Distributing, in Opposition
to Withholding.

PROV. xi. 26. "*But Blessing shall be upon the Head
of him that selleth.*" - - - - 127

S E R M O N LXXIX.

Of Prodigality.

AMOS vi. 1. "*Woe to them that are at Ease in
Sion.*" - - - - 137

S E R M O N LXXX.

Prudence, in Opposition to Prodigality.

I. COR. vii. 31. "*Use this World as not abusing it.*" 149

S E R M O N LXXXI.

Of the Evil of Intemperance.

I. COR. iii. 17. "*If any Man defile the Temple of
God, him will God destroy.*" - - - 161

S E R M O N LXXXII.

Sobriety, &c. in Opposition to Intemperance, &c.

I. COR. ix. 25, "*Every Man that striveth for the
Mastery is temperate in all Things.*" - 180

SERMON

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N LXXXIII.

Of the great Evil of Uncleaness,

I. COR. iii. 17. *"If any Man defile the Temple of
"God, him will God destroy."* - - - 192

S E R M O N LXXXIV.

On the great Duty and Virtue of Chastity, the
Opposite to Uncleaness.

I. THESS. iv. 4. *"That every one of you should know
"how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and
"Honour."* - - - - - 204

S E R M O N LXXXV.

Against Idleness.

PROV. x. 4. *"He becometh poor that dealeth with a
"slack Hand."* - - - - - 216

S E R M O N LXXXVI.

Of Industry, in Opposition to Idleness.

PROV. x. 4. *"But the Hand of the Diligent maketh
"rich."* - - - - - 233

S E R M O N LXXXVII.

Worldly-Mindedness, the Sin and Evil of it.

COL. iii. 2. *"Set not your Affections on Things
"on the Earth."* - - - - - 247

S E R M O N LXXXVIII.

Of Heavenly-Mindedness, in Opposition to the
preceding.

COL. iii. 2. *"Set your Affections on Things above."* 258

S E R M O N LXXXIX.

The Evil of inordinate Pleasure.

II. TIM. iii. 4. *"Lovers of Pleasures more than
"Lovers of God."* - - - - - 269

SERMON

S E R M O N X C.

Immoderate Sorrow, Dejection, and Reservedness,
the opposite Extreme of inordinate Pleasure.

PSALM xliii. 5. "*Why art thou cast down, O my
Soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?*" 283

S E R M O N X C I.

The Sin of profaning the Sabbath and Sanctuary
of God.

LEVIT. xxvi. 2. "*Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and
reverence my Sanctuary, I am the Lord.*" 302

S E R M O N X C I I.

Fervency in Devotion, in Opposition to the pro-
faning the Sabbath and Sanctuary of the Lord.

ROM. xii. 11. "*Fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.*" 320

S E R M O N X C I I I.

On the Holy Sacrament, and the Necessity of
partaking.

JOHN vi. 53. "*Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of
Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*" 331

S E R M O N X C I V.

A due Preparation for the Sacrament enforced;
the Opposite of neglecting it.

I. COR. xi. 29. "*He that eateth and drinketh unwor-
thily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself.*" 340

S E R M O N X C V.

Of the great Benefit of Consideration.

PSALM iv. 4. "*Commune with your own Heart.*" 350

S E R M O N X C V I.

Of the Evil and Danger of hardening the Heart,
the Opposite of Consideration.

PROV. xxviii. 14. "*He that hardeneth his Heart
shall fall into Mischief.*" 363

SERMON

S E R M O N - L X I X .

Of the Evil of Anxiety.

MATTHEW vi. 34. *"Take no Thought for the
"Morrow."*

THIS is part of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, wherein he proposed a short sum of Christian doctrine, in opposition to the false maxims and corrupt notions of morality which then reigned in the world; and indeed all the precepts he there laid down, tho' highly reasonable in themselves, were yet so distant from the common opinions and practice of the Jews, that we are not to wonder if (as St. Matthew informs us) "when he had ended his sayings, the multitude were astonished at his doctrine;" for they had heard nothing like it from their teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees.

And perhaps no one branch of it was more surprising to that worldly-minded people, so deeply immersed in the cares of life, and in a

VOL. V.

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restless.

restless concern for earthly things, than the rule given by him in the text, "Take no thought for the morrow."

A rule which, even to Christian ears, may seem at first sight somewhat harsh, and will therefore require to be a little explained, in order to its becoming a sure foundation of duty, and the proper subject of those reasonings and exhortations, with which I purpose to enforce it.

Our blessed Saviour, in the words before us, is so exceeding strong against all solicitous anxiety and worldly care, that rather than not condemn it effectually, he hath chosen to speak as if he condemned all care in general, further than for the present moment before us.

It is true, indeed, the prohibition is at first view absolute and general, but so are many others in Scripture, which yet have their limitations in the nature of things.

In the chapter next before us we have a prohibition just as general, "Swear not at all," and which yet we many times do, for religion's sake, and for the sake of peace and good order.

Again, Another immediately following is, "resist not evil;" yet on some occasions we all do, and ought to resist it.

A third is, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."—As therefore in these texts we must

must understand our Saviour to speak only of rash judgment, of needless and rash swearing, why should we not here also understand him to speak of needless thought, and anxious solicitude, and apprehend that he chose such comprehensive terms on all these subjects, because there was much occasion to warn men strongly, and, but little danger of their failing to make proper exceptions.

Amongst the several duties therefore which our blessed Lord exhorts Christians to, this is one, not to be too solicitous and concerned about what may happen to and befall us, but to refer ourselves, and all our concerns, to the providence of God, which at all times takes care of us; for the word "thought," in the text, signifies an anxious care about events—a care that is accompanied with trouble and disquiet of mind about what may befall us, about the good which we hope for and desire, or the evil which we fear may come upon us.

This our Lord exhorts us to throw off, and leave to his providence all those events which we are apt to be so solicitous and disquieted about, "casting all our care upon him, for he careth for us."

But, that we may not mistake our duty in this matter, I shall,

First, Shew what is not meant by the expression before us ; and then,

Secondly, What is really intended thereby.

Our blessed Lord doth not here intend to take men off from a provident care and diligence about the concerns of this life—no,

For this is not only contrary to reason, but also to many express precepts and passages of Scripture, wherein diligence is recommended to us, and the blessing of God, and the good success of our affairs promised thereto, wherein we are commanded to provide for those of our family, which cannot be done without some sort of care and application ; and wherein also slothfulness and indolence are condemned.

So that to take no care of ourselves, to use no diligence, or endeavour for the obtaining the good we desire, and the prevention of the evil we fear, this is to tempt the providence of God, and to cast that burthen upon him which he hath allotted to our share : Whosoever therefore shall thus trust in God, will be sure to affront him ; for the Commandment is, “ Put thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good.”

If therefore we are wanting on our part, we resist the commandment of the Most High.

Thus much is affirmatively implied in the words before us ; and then,

Secondly,

S E R M O N L X I X .

5

Secondly, By “taking no thought for the “morrow,” our Saviour intends these two “things:

First, That after all prudent care and diligence have been used by us, we should not be further solicitous, nor trouble ourselves about the event of things, which, when we have done all we can, will be out of our power; and,

Secondly, That we should refer the issue of them to God’s Providence, which is continually watchful over us, and knows how to dispose all things to the best, entirely confiding in his wisdom and goodness, that he will order all things for our good, and in that confidence resolving to rest satisfied and contented with his disposals, whatever they be.

The import of the phrase being thus discussed, I shall proceed to shew both the evil and unreasonableness of such anxious thoughts, and how little they are to be justified either in point of piety or prudence.

The evil of them lies in these particulars; that they are opposite to several plain precepts of Holy Writ; that they often invade the peculiar province and prerogative of God, and are always built on a secret distrust of his providence.

Several express commands there are in Scripture to the same import with this of the text.

“Be careful for nothing:” “Cast all your
“care upon him: “Commit thy way unto
“the Lord;” and,

Can a man transgress these commandments
without guilt, or entertain any degree of anx-
iety without transgression?

Indeed, when we indulge ourselves too far
in these melancholy presages, we are guilty of
impiety on another account; inasmuch as we
proudly and arrogantly assume to ourselves
hereby the fore-knowledge of the Almighty.

But further, That such anxiety is irreligious
will further appear, if we consider it as built
always on a secret distrust of God’s providence
and goodness towards us.

It hath indeed somewhat of the nature of in-
fidelity, and therefore our Saviour applies him-
self to those who give way to it under this
compellation: “O ye, of little faith.”

Did we repose that confidence in God which
we ought, it were impossible that a concern for
future events should much disquiet us. We do
not say that such a persuasion would render us
indifferent to all events, and wholly uncon-
cerned at the probable approach of impending
dangers; but it would in a great measure take
off the edge, and blunt the sharpness of our
expectations, and would compose and calm us
into a patient resignation of ourselves to the di-
vine

S E R M O N LXX.

vine will and appointment; it would make us hope the best, that there is room to hope for in every case, and to wait and expect the worst that can happen with tranquility and evenness.

There are many considerations to induce us hereto, which are, that we are hereby assured that our affairs are in the best of hands.

God, who made the world, best knows how to govern it, and the affairs therein. The wisdom which first formed us, and so many creatures, with reference to our necessity and comfort, is surely to be trusted with our future provision.

“Take, therefore, no thought for your
“lives, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall
“drink, or wherewithall ye shall be cloathed.”
“Is not the life more than meat, and the body
“than raiment?”

God hath given us our bodies and souls, and hath breathed into us the breath of life, without either our care or thought: He hath done the greater, will he not also do the less?

When we are therefore ready, anxiously and solicitously, to enquire after these things, and the necessities of life, let us consider whence we received our beings, and the origin of the various things around us, then we may be assured, that the wisdom which created them considered also how to support and supply them.

“Our

2 S E R M O N L X I X .

“ Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have
 “ need of all these things, and accordingly (in
 “ his wisdom) hath provided for them.”

With what admirable simplicity and force
 doth our Saviour (the divine preacher) enforce
 the consideration before us !

“ Consider (says he) the fowls of the air,
 “ for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor
 “ gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father
 “ feedeth them; are ye not much better than
 “ they ?” And,

“ Why take ye thought for raiment ? Con-
 “ sider the lillies of the field how they grow ;
 “ they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet
 “ I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all
 “ his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.”

“ Wherefore, if God so cloath the grafs of
 “ the field, which to day is, and to-morrow is
 “ cast into the oven, shall he not much more
 “ cloath you, O ye of little Faith ?”

But I forbear to enlarge further on this point,
 that I may have room for those considerations
 which more immediately relate to shew that an
 anxious concern for contingences is as destitute
 of all pretences to wisdom, as it is to goodness.

A censure this, perhaps, that will not easily
 be allowed, since the looking forward to the
 probable events of things hath been ever es-
 teemed one of the first and chiefeft instances of
 prudence :—

prudence :—It hath so, and with good reason, when that sagacity is employed in a proper manner, and within its due bounds ; when it gives the mind a calm and clear foresight of the difficulties it is likely to meet with, and leaves it at liberty, under that view, to prepare itself for the encounter.

But, when it serves only to disarm us of our courage, and to deprive us of our reason, to create vexation to us, and to multiply dangers, it is then the very “folly of foolishness,” as may appear from the ensuing reflections.

First, The task is infinite and endless, and after all, will not answer the design for which it is intended ; for “the counsel of the Lord “will stand, and he will do all his pleasure.”

He who makes fickle fortune, and what possibly may be, the object of his concern, hath supplied his mind with perpetual matter of disquiet, and pitched upon a fruitful subject of uneasiness, which can never be exhausted, for the possible evils and calamities of life are without number.

But, were it possible to guess at a remote event with some degree of assurance, yet it is impossible to know whether we ourselves shall live to see it.

It indeed may happen as we presage, but ere it happens we may be no more, and then it will

be

be all one to us, as though it should never happen at all; why then should man (so short lived) lengthen his cares to no purpose?

Why should a creature of only to day take thought for the morrow? If the evil we presage should indeed come, it will be time enough then to bear it, and the embittering it beforehand will yield no relief to us; it is rather tormenting us before the time, and adding imaginary evils to the certain ones we must hereafter endure: But,

If after all it should not come, then our fear of it is our only evil; and surely such a fear is vanity and vexation of spirit, in the utmost propriety of the expression. Anxiety of mind makes us feel a thousand afflictions which possibly might never overtake us, and multiplies those which really do. Besides, this concern for futurity robs us of all the ease, and the advantages which might arise from a proper and discreet use of the present moment.

The greatest pleasure, on this side Heaven, certainly lies in an even and serene, in a calm, composed, and steady mind, that is inwardly at rest, and, of course, at leisure to enjoy all outward comforts; that hopes for the best, and is prepared for the worst; that enjoys the present, and is not anxiously concerned for the future. Such a temper of mind is the greatest blessing

bleſſing which God can beſtow upon a man, becauſe it gives taſte and reliſh to all other bleſſings, and therefore the greateſt folly a man can be guilty of is, to part with it upon any account, or to quit a certain tranquillity now, out of the vain fear of being robbed of it hereafter. Again,

It is very unreaſonable to diſquiet ourſelves about diſtant evils, it often happening that the preſence of the things themſelves ſuggeſts better expedients, wiſer and quicker counſels to us, than all our wiſdom and forethought at a diſtance can do. "The morrow (ſays our Lord) "ſhall take thought for the things of itſelf;" i. e. it ſhall bring along with it a power and ſtrength of mind anſwerable to its neceſſities, and a frame of ſpirit every way ſuited to our circumſtances and occasions, which poſſibly; when they come, may be ſo different from our preſent forecaſt of them, that we ſhall be obliged to ſet ourſelves aſreſh again, to conſider in order to ſuit ourſelves to them; why then ſhould we be at the needleſs expence of thought before-hand?

When we are therefore afflicting ourſelves with ſad omens and preſages, and applauding our own wiſdom and foresight in ſo doing, let us remember the deciſion of one who was certainly wiſe, and who hath told us that "the
" fear

“fear of man bringeth a snare; but he that
“trusteth in the Lord shall be safe.”

To these several accounts of the folly and unreasonableness of anxiety, permit me to add the following, viz. that he who indulges it forfeits his interest in the divine protection and providence; and, that is a loss for which all the wisdom, skill, and foresight in the world, can make no amends.

“It is a fearful thing (says the Apostle) to
“fall into the hands of the living God;” and surely, next to that is the taking ourselves out of his hands, and to exempt ourselves from his care, which he (in good construction) is supposed to do, who sets himself with any degree of solicitude to “take thought for the morrow.”

In all our affairs and concerns then, after we have used our best endeavours, let us rest ourselves satisfied, and refer the rest to God, whose providence governs the world, and takes care of our interests, when they seem to be in the greatest danger, and whose disposals it is impossible to alter.

The last reason I shall add to this purpose is, that we hereby seclude a due care for the more important concerns of a better life.

There are (as I have shewn) many considerations whereby to evince the folly of an inordinate care for the things of this life.

But

But this is not all ; not only folly, but wickedness also is ascribed hereto.

“ No man can serve two masters ; ye cannot
“ serve God and mammon ;” for, “ where your
“ treasure is, there will your heart be also ;”
and what will be their portion, who in their
hearts depart from the living God, in quest of
uncertain riches ?

“ Take therefore no thought, saying, what
“ shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or where-
“ withal shall we be cloathed ? for, after all
“ these things do the Gentiles seek, and your
“ heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need
“ of all these things : but seek ye first the king-
“ dom of God and his righteousness, and all
“ these things shall be added unto you.”

“ Take therefore no thought for the mor-
“ row, for the morrow shall take thought for
“ the things of itself ; sufficient unto the day
“ is the evil thereof.”

S E R M O N LXX.

Of Trust in God, in Opposition to
Anxiety.

ISAIAH XXVI. 4. *“Trust ye in the Lord for
“ever.”*

THERE are no sentiments which the inspired writers seem more solicitous to encourage in the mind of man than those of an habitual trust in the providence of God, expressed on all proper occasions, in suitable acknowledgements or acts of devotion towards him ; and considering the indigent condition of our nature, and the shortness of our views, there cannot surely be a privilege more to be desired by us, than that of a ready access to a Being of infinite wisdom, and power, and goodness, for the direction of our paths, and the supply of all our wants ; and yet, I fear, there is not any privilege more frequently slighted by us than this.

Weak

Weak and short-sighted as we are, we affect to be independent of any superior aid or information; in the eager prosecution of our various schemes we neglect to apply to him, who alone can enable us to conduct them with safety and success; and if at any time he is pleased, notwithstanding, to permit them for a while to prosper, we then begin immediately to applaud our own foresight and activity, “sacrificing (as the prophet speaks) to our own net, and burning incense to our own dragg, as if by them, and them only, our portion were fat, and our meat plenteous.”

A proceeding this, not only undutiful and injurious to Almighty God, but also highly prejudicial to our own real interests; for “after all, the Lord is King, be we never so impatient or unmindful of him.”

With a view then to this prevailing, but fatal error in the conduct of human life, and in order to prevent men (as far as may be) from falling into it, and lest so comfortable an invitation, whilst it guards against the fatal extremes of self-sufficiency and impiety, should be misapplied to the pernicious purposes of slothfulness or enthusiasm, I have made choice of these words before us, and shall endeavour, as usefully as I can, to explain and enforce the advice contained in them.

To trust in the Lord then, must be, I presume, instead of confiding solely or principally in our own wisdom or abilities, to put ourselves under the direction of his laws, and the guardianship of his Providence, and must import,

First, a right understanding of the thing which God hath promised, and what we may expect from him.

Secondly, A careful use of all such means as God hath put within our power.

Thirdly, A steady resolution to reject all expedients disagreeable to his will ; and,

Lastly, A dutiful acquiescence in all his dispensations, alike prepared to adore his wisdom in the delay or denial of our requests, as to acknowledge his bounty in the more liberal and direct grant of them.

These particulars, as they may afford matter of useful instruction, and at the same time explain the duty before us, I shall here somewhat enlarge on. And,

First, That our reliance may be rational, we should set ourselves to know what it is that God hath promised, and what we may expect from him.

From the Gospel we may learn that no absolute promise is made to us of length of days, of health or wealth, of friends or reputation.

But

But what we may expect from our heavenly Father is, that we shall probably receive a competency of the necessities of life, and a heart capable of enjoying it; that we shall certainly obtain what upon the whole is most convenient for us, and conducive to our true happiness; that if disappointments, distresses, or calamities of any kind befall us, we shall be endued with strength of mind sufficient to support, if not overcome them, if we are not wanting to ourselves in any of these things; and that if our measure of worldly blessings fall short in some respects, it shall be abundantly made up to us in another and better way, if we patiently abide it.

He therefore who will trust in God, must set his heart upon no particular present advantage, but leave that entirely to his heavenly Father, as to the only proper judge, and acquiesce in his sacred will; and, if he is satisfied, he hath his reward; for he who is contented cannot be unhappy. But,

Secondly, To "trust in God" further implies a diligent use of all the means that are in our power.

If God hath bestowed upon us health and strength, and natural abilities, it is that we should make use of them. By giving us the means to provide for ourselves, he hath (in ef-

feet) given us a provision, nor will he work miracles in favour of indiscretion.

As faith without works of goodness will carry no man to Heaven, so neither will faith (i. e. trust in God) without works of industry carry us through this world with any credit and satisfaction.

Even the fowls of the air, which by our Saviour are said to be fed by our heavenly Father, yet take pains to gather their provision, and by being examples to us of industry in their way, teach us that providence will do nothing for the sluggard.

Even the Apostles, to whom our Lord's well known admonition against thoughtfulness was eminently if not peculiarly addressed, had the wisdom of the Serpent, in conjunction with the harmlessness of the Dove, recommended to them by the same authority.

The truth is, we are to cast all our care of events upon God, but not so as to become careless of the means, or at all the less sober and vigilant ourselves.

To neglect our own part in any undertaking on a presumption that God's providence will accomplish the whole for us, were to suppose him a patron of sloth, and by no means a rewarder of industry; and whoever thus trusts in God will be sure to affront him, for the commandment

mandment is, "Put thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good." If, therefore, we are wanting in our own part, we resist the commandment of the Most High. But further,

If to depend upon God's favour whilst we are doing nothing for ourselves cannot but be displeasing to him, how much more provoking must it needs be, to hope for his blessing upon the violation of his laws?

This indeed is so glaring an absurdity, that it might reasonably be thought hardly possible to be fallen into, or necessary to be guarded against, had not experience (to our confusion) declared it unto us.

This is such a dependance on God as his holy word gives no encouragement for, but the reverse.

God's protection and blessing are annexed to obedience; they therefore who will not serve him, must not presume to trust in him, for to the ungodly he is an avowed enemy.

In all our undertakings therefore, especially in matters of consequence, before we presume to recommend ourselves to the Almighty, let us assure our hearts before him, for to implore the favour of God, or recommend ourselves to him in iniquity, can never be acceptable or well-pleasing to an Almighty God, or a righteous Judge of all the earth. But,

Lastly,

Lastly, The temper here recommended implies not only a firm reliance on God's providence at the time of our presenting our addresses to him, and an hearty co-operating therewith, but also an undeviating acquiescence in his disposal afterwards; as it excludes every previous distrust, so it allays every subsequent murmur and complaint.

We are "not to faint, neither be weary in well-doing;" for far from desponding upon every disappointment, or delay of a favourable answer, and striking out of the strait road of our duty into any crooked paths, we are to persevere therein, and "trust him at all times."

Holy David had his distresses and dejections of mind like other men, under which we find him more than once crying out, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" But, did he utterly faint, or fly to any unwarrantable expedients?—No; his sure trust was in the goodness of God, and having often experienced the sufficiency of that support, he was always willing to "tarry the Lord's leisure" for a happy deliverance out of all his troubles, and the seasonable accomplishment of all his desires.

There is something (if possible) yet more glorious in the ever-memorable declaration of the prophet Habbakuk. "Although the fig-tree
" tree

“tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be
 “found in the vine; though the labourer of
 “the olive shall fail, and the field yield no
 “increase; though the flock shall be cut off
 “from the fold, and there shall be no herd in
 “the stall—yet will I rejoice in the Lord, yea
 “I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

A degree of resignation this devoutly to be aspired to, though with difficulty to be attained by every good man, under the like trials.

Nay, should any of us find cause to complain in the words of holy Job, “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there—and backward,
 “but I cannot perceive him: On the left
 “hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right
 “hand that I cannot see him;” still we should be ready to say after the same pattern, “tho’
 “he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Upon the whole then,

We must so trust in God as to use our own sincere endeavours, as neither to neglect nor forfeit his favour, then shall either the thing we wish for, or something still better, in due season be given unto us.

—What I have been thus recommending is so advantageous even for the present, that it ought rather to be considered as a privilege than a duty. God hath made singular promises in favour of it.

We

We are told in Scripture, that “he careth
“for those, and will sustain them who cast
“their cares upon him;” that “he will keep
“him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed
“upon him, and that such shall want nothing,”
nothing that a wise and good man would reasonably desire.

From whence it plainly appears how much he values this temper, and that because it is the greatest honour we can pay unto him.

By this we acknowledge his wisdom, power, veracity, and goodness, and manifest that our belief herein is not a barren speculation, but fully replete with its proper effects, as having a due influence upon us; yea,

Reliance upon God (where it is in an eminent degree, raises the soul, in a manner, above itself, and all that can befall it, and gives it, in some measure, a resemblance of the invariable nature of its great author. The Scripture calls God the “the rock of ages.” Much the same expression is used in it concerning those who rely upon him. “They who put
“their trust in the Lord shall be even as the
“Mount Sion, which may not be removed,
“but standeth fast for ever.” A firm trust in the assistance of an Almighty Being naturally produces patience, cheerfulness, and all other
dispositions

dispositions of mind, that alleviate those calamities which we are not able to remove.

How calmly do those glide through all, even the roughest events, who can make but a right estimate of the happiness, as well as the virtue of a governable will resigned to God! How does it enervate and enfeeble every calamity! nay, indeed, it triumphs over it, and, by that conjunction with him that ordains it, may be said to command even what it suffers.

It was a philosophical maxim, that a "wise moral man could not be injured, could not be miserable;" but sure it is much more true of him, who has that divine wisdom of Christian trust and resignation, that combines and inwraps all his choices with God's, and is neither at the pains nor hazard of his own election, but is secure of every thing that is really best for him, unless Omniscience can be deceived, and Omnipotence defeated.

To conclude, we are passing through a world of no great moment in itself, but in the consequences of our conduct in it, of the utmost importance to us, where we find ourselves in the midst of snares not to be guarded against, and of difficulties not to be surmounted by any wisdom or strength merely our own; and wretched indeed must "the days of our pilgrimage" have been, had not God (in judgment

ment remembering mercy) found means to
“ give us the comfort of his help again, and to
“ establish us with his free spirit :” “ Had he
“ not granted us his word for a lamp to our
“ feet, and a light to our paths ?”

“ Who then is there among you that feareth
“ the Lord, yet at certain seasons walketh in
“ darkness and hath no light ?” “ Let him
“ trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon
“ his God, and he will abundantly supply
“ him ; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting
“ strength.”

S E R M O N LXXI.

Against Covetousness.

HABBAKUK ii. 9, "*Woe to him that coveteth
" an evil covetousness."*

ALL covetousness is evil.—The dire description which the Prophet here gives of covetousness; the woes, and many ill consequences which attend it, are, one would think, sufficient to deter all men from so destructive an evil, so pernicious to a man's self, and to all around him; for, so far is he from being hereby "delivered from the power of "evil," that he even "consults shame to himself, and sins against his own soul;" and, every thing feeling the grasp of his all-gathering hand, shall in concert exclaim and answer against him, "woe to him that coveteth an "evil covetousness."

Amongst all the irregular appetites of men, there is none that is more common or unrea-

sonable, and of more universal bad influence in the world, than this of the vice before us; yea, "there is not a more wicked thing than "a covetous man, as, for a piece of bread, "that man will transgress."

There is scarce a crime which does not take rise from the "*auri sacra fames*," the love of money. When a man is once enslaved by the love hereof, conscience has no weight with him; not what is just, but what is lucrative; not what is reasonable, but what makes for interest; "the love of money being the root of "all evil." In speaking further to this vice, I shall,

First, Ascertain the true meaning and import of it; and then,

Secondly, See what considerations can be produced to discountenance the same.

The shortest description that can be given of it is this, viz. "That it is an inordinate desire "and love of riches." "It is either an unlawful desire of what is not our own, or a "too greedy delight in what is so." But,

When this desire and love become inordinate is not so easy to be determined, and therefore, that we may the better understand what this sin of covetousness is which we are so frequently and earnestly in Scripture cautioned against, and that whilst we are speaking against it, we may not, under that general word, condemn

demn what is lawful and commendable, it will be necessary that we shew,

First, What is not, either in Scripture or right reason, condemned under this title.

Secondly, What is by either of these termed as a plain instance and proof of it.

I shall but little more than barely mention the particulars of this distinction, for this twofold reason, viz. because, when mentioned, it is better understood than described, and because it will make way for matters of higher moment and importance. And,

First, By covetousness we do not mean to condemn a due care about the things of this present life, nor a regular industry and diligence for the obtaining them, nor every degree of love and affection for them: "He that provideth not for his own is worse than an infidel, and hath denied the faith."

Notwithstanding the high terms in which our Saviour speaks of resignation, and "casting all our care upon God," and his forbidding his disciples the least care and forecast for themselves, yet we find the Apostles every where charging Christians to labour with great diligence in their callings, that they may be able to provide for themselves.

We are to understand these expressions of our Lord therefore as intended, not for a general

and standing rule to all Christians, but only as designed for his disciples, and the peculiar exigencies of that time, and are therefore to be taken in a limited sense, agreeable to the nature of man, and the manifold necessities he has to encounter; being only meant as a check to that over-solicitousness, care, and anxiety, which we see but too many are guilty of.

A provident care then, and a regular industry, and such a degree of love to the things of this world, as are consistent with the love of God, and the care of our souls, do not come under this denomination. But,

Secondly, I am to shew what is properly so termed.

Covetousness is a word of large extent, and comprehends in it most of the irregularities of our minds, either in desiring or getting, either in possessing or using the things of this life.

An insatiable desire after the things of this world, tho' it be free from injustice, as (God knows) it but seldom is, falls under this title.

“Woe unto them that join house to house,
“that lay field to field, till there be no place
“that they may be placed alone in the midst
“of the earth.”

Our Saviour (speaking of the rich man in the parable) doth not so much as intimate any
indirect

indirect or unjust ways of gain which this man used, whereby to increase his substance, but condemns his insatiate desire and thirst after more.

He was continually increasing his estate, and enlarging his barns, to make more room still for his fruits, that he might "lay up goods on store for many years."

Covetousness, as it is a restless and insatiable desire of riches, not for any other end or use, but only to hoard and preserve, and perpetually to increase them, is the greatest evidence of a base ungenerous mind, and, at the same time, the highest injustice to the world: for,

What can be more unreasonable than for a man to engross to himself all that which is the common support and conveniency of mankind, and to aggravate his crime by a continual increase, thereby robbing the public of what he hath once got in possession.

So that even this alone is covetousness, and a great fault, though it be attended with no other, because it is unjust, unreasonable, and without end.

But much more truly doth that man come under this denomination, who, to this desire, adds arts of extortion or deceit in order to accumulate; so that all acts of fraud or oppression, whereby men endeavour to get and en-

crease the transitory things of this life, as it is
 “to the hurt of the former owners thereof,”
 is a branch of the sin before us.

This vice may be further discovered from the
 temper and dispositions of men, when they take
 more pains for their earthly than for their eter-
 nal good; when they are sordid to themselves,
 and cannot find in their heart either to use or
 enjoy what they have, nor out of their abund-
 ance spare any thing to the relief of the poor
 and needy, when want and misery rather move
 their scorn than pity, and place their chief trust
 and happiness in riches, “making gold their
 “hope, and saying to the fine gold, thou art
 “my confidence.”

Let this suffice for the import of the advice
 before us; we come, therefore,

Secondly, To see what considerations can
 be produced to discountenance the same: and,

First, It is devoid of its end.

The covetous man, by riches, hopes to ac-
 cumulate the end of all his wishes. But, alas,
 vain man, how much deceived! for the desire
 of increasing riches increases with the increase
 thereof, and “there is no end of all his la-
 bours.” yea, the more he hath, the more
 he still desireth to have.

Wealth and content do not always dwell
 together; nay, so far from that, that perhaps
 they

they very seldom meet; and in this the Scripture is exprefs: "He that loveth ſilver ſhall
 "not be ſatisfied with ſilver, nor he that loveth
 "abundance with increaſe."

It is not in the nature of wealth to ſatisfy a covetous mind.

Every deſire that is natural is ſatisfied and at reſt with a decent ſupply; but covetouſneſs is not the thirſt of nature, but of a diſordered mind, and like the thirſt of a fever, the more it is complied with, the more it is inflamed.

So that if a covetous man was poſſeſſed of the wealth of both the Indies, yet this would not fill up the meaſure of all his deſires; for,

"Multa deſunt luxuriæ, avaritiæ omnia."—

"Craving luxury wants many things, but avarice, joyleſs and inſatiable, wants every thing."—A poor man's wants may be ſatisfied with a little, but the wants of a covetous man are incurable, becauſe he craves both that which he hath, as well as that which he hath not.

The man therefore who would be truly rich, muſt not ſo much think to increaſe his fortune as retrench his appetites; for riches of themſelves are not only ſuperfluous, but mean, and little more to the poſſeſſor than to the looker-on. What is the end of avarice, when at beſt we are but ſtewards of what we falſely call our
 own;

own? and all those things which we pursue with so much hazard, as well to get as to keep, what are they but the mere deposits of fortune? there is nothing our own, we are only allowed the use of them for a few moments, and then they pass to another master, the account of them only remains with us.

Seeing then these things, and that our desires increase with our riches, is not a man by so much the more miserable, the more he possesses? Besides, he hereby wholly contradicts the scheme of all his proceedings.

Avarice, of all other passions, is the least to be accounted for, as it precludes the miser from all pleasure, except that of hoarding; the gamester, the prodigal, the ambitious, have something to plead by way of palliatives for the inordinate affections of their respective objects and pursuits, but the miser gratifies his passion at the expence of every conveniency and indulgence, or even necessary of life.

The reason why he takes so much pains to accumulate the things of this world is, that he may make his life convenient and happy; but how can this be obtained in the drudgery of all his labours?

History tells us of many debauchees; but there was never yet an illustrious miser in nature.

Grandeur

Grandeur of soul cannot consist with the sordid baseness of avarice; besides, what can be more unjust than to hoard up that which is the life and soul of commerce, which affords us the conveniences of life, and make no use at all of it? It is to persevere in the crime, and to rob the public by a continual theft.

Those who take away by violence in order to disperse with profusion, are much more excusable.

But further, it is devoid of religion, and all duty to God, and brotherly affection.

“No man can serve two masters,” and “where our treasure is, there will our heart be also:” yea,

“He that seeth his brother that hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth either the love of God or man in him?” Thus doth covetousness hinder us in the proper offices and duties of this life, and debars us also in the more important concerns of a better.

In the course of this life there are so many temptations attending wealth; either to arrogance or oppression; to atheism or profaneness; to prodigality, or a too much reservedness; that our Saviour had but too much reason for that severe question, “How hard

“hard is it for a rich man to enter into the
“kingdom of Heaven?”

Riches have their use, it is true; but, even like virtue's self, are sometimes made the occasion and cloak for every rank abuse. “When
“to virtuous hands 'tis given, it blesses like
“the dews of Heaven; but when the miser
“crams his chest, gold is the canker of the
“breast; 'tis avarice, insolence, and pride,
“and every shocking vice beside:” It is the patron and price of all wickedness.

It is not pretended that “riches will profit in the day of wrath,” neither indeed will they greatly benefit us, even as to the term of this transitory life—I mean a super-abundance of the things before us, for, according to the increase thereof, will be the increase of its burthen to us.

The labour of getting, the care in retaining, and fear of losing, will more than overbalance the glory of possessing.

This was what made our blessed Saviour so piously conclude, from that request of the worldly-minded man, who desired to be partaker in his brother's inheritance: “Take
“heed, says he, and beware of covetousness,
“for a man's life, or the happiness of human
“life, consisteth not in the abundance of the
“things which he possesseth.”

Happiness

Happiness consisteth in the moderation of our desires. Excessive desires hinder the ambitious, the voluptuous, and the covetous, from being ever satisfied, because they breed in the heart an insatiability which tempts them still to seek after what they do not possess, and never to rest content even with what they have.

To know how to moderate our desires, therefore, is going a great way in the path which leads to true happiness, for, by coveting superfluities, we deprive ourselves of necessities. Nature, in order to be preserved from distress, needs no stately palaces, but is satisfied with natural plain simples.

It is sufficient for us to love virtue, and to know how to be satisfied with a little, because it is but a little that we really want; in proportion as we retrench ourselves, all that Heaven grants us besides is superfluity.

But further, the things of this world are not of long continuance; and, when the messenger of death shall say to us, as it did to the rich man in the Gospel, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," then "whose shall all those things be which we have gathered together?"

When we come to die, nothing will minister less comfort to us than a great estate; for, like the young man in the Gospel, we shall "go away

“away so much the more sorrowful, because
 “we have great possessions.”

Add to this, that it is hardly possible to assign any vice, into which men may not be betrayed by the evil before us; for, whoever is thus tenacious of his own, and desirous of another's, rapacious in getting, or penurious in enjoying, it cannot be supposed will be either true to his word, or just in his dealings.

If we can doubt this, we may satisfy ourselves from the conduct of Ahab, who, to gratify this abominable passion, made no scruple either of subornation or of murder, and that too committed with the very worst aggravation, under the specious shew of justice.

Hear what St. Paul delivers on this head:
 “They that will be rich fall into temptation
 “and snare, and into many foolish and hurtful
 “lusts, which drown men in destruction and
 “perdition;—for the love of money is the root
 “of all evil.”

The saddest reflection of all is, the account we must hereafter give of all our talents, of the use and the abuse of them.

In the awful day of accounts it will be our greatest aggravation to have been “rich in this
 “world, and not rich in good works,” much more to have been “barren and unfruitful, and
 “to every good work reprobate.”

In

In St. James they may largely read their doom: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have heaped up treasure together for the last days."

No marvel then that it is so expressly asserted, that "riches detained are retained to the hurt of the owners thereof." "Woe to him that heapeth up wealth in abundance, and rejoiceth alone in the possession thereof; that grindeth the face of the poor, that hardeneth his heart against misery, and thriveth on oppression without feeling: the curse of iniquity pursueth him; anxiety, fear, and the pit, do continually take vengeance upon him."

"Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness, that increaseth that which is not his, and that ladeth himself with thick clay; that saith to the gold, Thou art my God, and to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence, and in his heart departeth from the living God, to trust in uncertain riches."

"Lay not up therefore treasures for yourselves upon earth, where the moth and rust

"doth corrupt; and where thieves break thro'
 "and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures
 "in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth
 "corrupt, and where thieves do not break thro'
 "nor steal; for where your treasure is, there
 "will your heart be also."

• See the Discourse on Worldly-Mindedness.

LXXII

SERMON LXXII.

Mediocrity, in Opposition to Cove-
tousness.

PROV. xxx. 8. *"Give me neither Poverty nor
"Riches; feed me with Food convenient for me."*

AS Covetousness is nothing else but an un-
bounded desire after the good things of
this life (as they are so called), in order to the
accumulating of great wealth, it may not be
unsuitable if we recommend to you (in oppo-
sition) the great example of moderation here
before us, and the benefits accruing therefrom.
*"Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me
"with food convenient for me."*

Resignation to the Divine Will, and con-
tentedness with a competency, without any
anxious covetous desires of abundance in su-
perfluity, is not the least among the Christian
graces; but contrariwise, of high esteem with,
and of excellent use and benefit to the sons of
men.

It is that which makes us to go down smoothly and evenly through the current of life, and frees us from a thousand anxieties, as well as mischiefs, to which the insatiableness of avarice continually exposeth us.

As to the preference which Agur here gives a middle state of life before poverty, it may easily be accounted for, that being a state of life attended with so many visible and great inconveniencies, that there is no evil in the world, the idea whereof ordinarily strikes the mind with more terrible apprehensions. Sin, which is a moral evil, and in that respect indeed more to be feared than the natural evil of poverty, or all the miserable effects of it put together, is yet what men but too often chuse to commit in order to avoid it.

It was therefore very natural, and indeed most reasonable, for Agur to pray, that his condition of life (if God so pleased) might not be pressing, poor, or necessitous.

But the reasonableness of this prayer, in the other branch of it, against riches, doth not appear altogether so clear and evident.

For riches, contributing in such variety of instances to the happiness of human life, and being also, on so many accounts, very subservient to the ends of religion and piety, it may seem strange that so pious and prudent a person should

should here make it his request to God that he might not have the command of a rich and plentiful fortune.

If there be any difficulty in what is here observed, the sequel of my discourse upon the words before us will give a full solution hereto.

It is not the nature of every man to be suited to every thing. The different tempers of men are to be consulted in whatever they desire in this world, how just or lawful soever the thing desired may be in itself; and the reason is, because external objects owe the great force they have to corrupt to the force of our inclinations from within.

The power of affluence to tempt us to forget God, and entice us from our duty to all irregularities, is but too evident here to be insisted upon. Accordingly we find Agur assigning it as a chief reason why he deprecates riches, "lest (says he) I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?"

There is scarce any person who hath not his predominant passion; we ought therefore more peculiarly to guard, where we know ourselves to be most exposed and defenceless.

"All things" (says the wise son of Sirach) "are not profitable for all men," there being a thousand things which other men may allow themselves in with safety, innocence, and
 E 3 reputation,

reputation, from which, if we would not endanger ourselves, we must keep at the greatest distance.

It is our duty therefore on all occasions prematurely to consider things, and guard against the vices which do "more easily beset us." And though we "knew (with St. Paul) that "all things were lawful for us," yet with him also we should know that "all things are not "expedient for us."

But again, there are also accidental circumstances which may render riches much less, if at all, proper to be desired.

In the state of persecution, where men are in danger of being put to any severe trial of their affections between God and the world, the less they are engaged with those things on which the pomp and pleasures of life depend, the happier disposition they are in to "chuse "the better part."

The necessity of providing for our own is what nature pleads very strongly with every man; but with some men she now and then carries her argument too far; for, under pretence of discharging this natural and necessary duty, they become insensible to the miseries, to the wants and necessities of others.

But, to shew us that there is something strangely insatuating in the love of riches, it
is

is generally observed to be the most strong and violent in the decays of age, and when one would think there should be the least provocation to it.

There are (without doubt) reasons of providence, altogether wise, for the several passions, more peculiarly incident to us in the several periods of life.

But that the old and aged, who have long experienced the vanity of the world, and who are incapable of its enjoyments (were they really more satisfactory), and upon the point of leaving them for ever; whose hopes, in a word, ought to be full of immortality, and directed upon its future state;

That men, at such a time, should entertain a passion for riches, so very unsuitable in all these respects to the circumstances they are under, is what we cannot easily resolve into any wise or good reasons whatever, but should rather indeed count such a passion, if not directly impious, yet at least very foolish and preposterous; and there is no great reason to doubt but when Agur here deprecates riches, he considered himself more particularly with regard to these circumstances.

“Two things (says he) have I required of thee, deny me not before I die;”—as if the nearer and more sensible approaches which
Death

Death was making towards him had rendered it his more especial duty to take off his thoughts from the things of this world, and turn them upon that endless and ever-durable state, which he was going speedily to enter upon.

These are some of the many reasons whereby a middle state of life is preferable to either poverty or riches; but as it is not the lot of every man to be thus circumstanced, and as there are wise reasons for God's different dealings with the sons of men, I shall now lay before you a few arguments and considerations, whereby to exhort to an entire submission and cheerful acquiescence in whatever state it hath, or shall please God to call us, without either repining at our condition, or coveting the things of another, to make ours the more prosperous; and here the greatest difficulty it is presumed will be in persuading people to this duty, who labour under hard and pressing circumstances; but,

If poverty, by engaging men in the necessary methods of procuring a livelihood, takes them off more frequently from the duties of piety and devotion, or occasions greater distractions of mind in the performance of such duties; if it cast such an heavy damp and weight upon their spirits that they cannot raise them to the higher flights of reason and contemplation,

temptation, yet let them not, on these accounts, be discouraged, or abandon themselves to despair.

God, who knows whereof they are made, will make gracious allowances for the temptations which do "more easily beset them," and for such failures to which they are more subject, provided they be careful to the utmost of their power to do according to the best of their ability, and the extent of their knowledge—God (as to the rest) will be gracious and merciful unto them.

Besides, there are seasons wherein an indigent condition, instead of being an impediment to the devotions of men, may rather tend to inflame them to a greater height; for, when all visible supports and human means fail, where should they fly for succour with so great ardour and alacrity, as to him who is able (whenever he pleases) to supply all their wants, and certainly will do it in such a manner, measure, and proportion, as in his wisdom shall seem most convenient for them.

Doubtless the soul, upon pouring forth her pious complaint in the day of distress, when she desires to take sanctuary in the divine fulness, and panteth after the fountain of all good, "as the hart after the water-brooks," in such fervent and devotional applications to God,
even

even under the most difficult and pressing circumstances of life, is sometimes transported with joy, infinitely beyond all the sensual pomp and pleasures which this life can afford. Again,

Neither ought men to be too much affected with the contempt or ill-usage which poverty sometimes exposes them to; for we know that "the disciple is not above his master."

• Christians reduced to an indigent condition must, in a corrupt world, sometimes expect to meet with undeserved indignity; but this ought not to give them any pain, but rather afford them matter of joy and consolation, since they are in a state sanctified by the choice which the Son of God himself made of it, and which hath so many other excellent precedents, not only to secure it from contempt, but even to do it credit and honour.

Again, where it hath been the misfortune of some (a case that too frequently happens) to have been neglected in their education, and so are brought up in ignorance, yet they have this to support them under the sense thereof, that provided, according to the measure of what they know, they are "careful to maintain good works," God will be gracious and merciful to them, and not "expect to reap where he hath not sown," or require any returns

turns greater than their receipts; for "he accepts of a man according to what he hath, and not according to that which he hath not."

As to rich men, it may be thought unnecessary to use any arguments to persuade them to be satisfied with their condition, and the favourable dispositions of providence towards them; and yet, contentment is not always to be found among them.

An insatiable desire of increasing, which is sometimes attended with most groundless and chimerical fears of losing what they have, often render them very uneasy amidst all the enjoyments wherewith they appear to be surrounded; and betwixt the ambition of accumulating riches, and the apprehensions they are under of being, by one accident or other, deprived of them, they are but too apt to neglect the proper occasions of making themselves "rich in good works," and even sometimes to practice very inhuman acts of violence and oppression; however, at most times anxiously retaining what, through avarice, they have unjustly acquired.

But these are returns to God's providence which equally argue an evil heart of unbelief in men, and the basest ingratitude to God for all the mercies conferred upon us.

To

To conclude: Though Christ blesses the poor, and pronounces woes to the rich, as having received their consolation, yet Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, David, and Solomon, were so. In truth, neither riches nor poverty bless or curse any man, otherwise than as we behave unseemly under them, but have their different effects upon us, according to our different demeanour in either state.

In a word, none that are poor are blessed, if they are proud, unbecoming themselves; nor any rich man cursed, but he that places his portion and consolation in riches.

“The man to whom God hath given riches,
 “and blessed with a mind to employ them
 “aright, is peculiarly favoured, and highly
 “distinguished; but he that heapeth up wealth
 “in abundance, and rejoiceth alone in the possession thereof; that grindeth the face of the
 “poor, and thriveth on oppression without
 “feeling, and hardeneth his heart against the
 “distresses of another, is cursed in his own
 “iniquity; anxiety, fear, and the pit, do continually take vengeance upon him.

“Let the poor man comfort himself, yea rejoice, for he hath many reasons; he sitteth
 “down to his morsel in peace, and is not
 “crouded with dependents, nor teized with the
 “clamours of solicitation. Debarred from the
 dainties

“ dainties of the rich, he escapeth also their
“ diseases. The bread that he eateth is it
“ not sweet to his taste? the water that he
“ drinketh, is it not pleasant to his thirst? yea,
“ far more delicious than the richest draughts
“ of the luxurious. His labour preserveth his
“ health, and procureth him a repose, to which
“ the downy bed of sloth is a stranger.

“ He limiteth his desires with humility, and
“ the calm of contentment is sweeter to his
“ soul than all the acquirements of wealth and
“ grandeur.

“ Let not the rich therefore presume on his
“ riches, nor the poor man in his poverty yield
“ to despondence; for the providence of God
“ dispenseth happiness to them both: they here
“ meet together, the Lord is the maker of them
“ all.”

Let us then, in every state of life, demean
ourselves according thereto, and not eagerly
grasp at things beyond our reach, nor covet
things that are, in comparison, nothing worth,
and which are not absolutely necessary for us.

But, “ as God hath, in wisdom, constituted
“ and ordained different states of life for the
“ benefit and advancement of his true and faith-
“ ful servants, so we should in all things truly
“ and faithfully serve him in them, to the ho-
“ nour and glory of his name.”

S E R M O N LXXIII.

Of the Evil of Ambition.

JEREMIAH xlv. 5. *"Seekest thou great things
"for thyself? Seek them not."*

IF there be yet remaining in the mind of man an affection worthy of its high extraction, or capable of producing fruits beneficial and praise-worthy, it is this, which may here seem to be discountenanced and condemned.

To a desire of "great things," things either really great, or apprehended to be such, the world has in fact all along been indebted for most of the good things done in it.

Where this passion is overpowered in the breasts of particular persons, every generous sentiment decays, and consequently every manly pursuit in proportion; and, in truth, scarce would the "pre-eminence of a man above a
"beast" be worth asserting, were every tendency towards "great things" wholly lost
from

from among us; were the erect posture of our bodies no longer accompanied with a suitable elevation of our souls.

In a word (and to preface the whole), the desire condemned in the text is not a desire of any thing perfective of our nature, or suited to the dignity of it, nor yet of any thing necessary to preserve the order, or promote the happiness of the world about us, but only the misapplication and misconduct of it; and how justly in this view it is to be discountenanced, may sufficiently appear from considering the reasonableness of the advice before us.

The two principal objects of a wise man's concern, so far I mean as relates to himself, will (it is supposed) be allowed to be "an easy and safe passage through this short life," and "a secure reversion of happiness in the endless life to come;" and should not only the irregular pursuit, but the very possession of the great things of this world, appear likely to expose both these to no small hazard, the point before us will (I presume) want no further illustration; and,

First, Let us enquire how the case stands with regard to a man's quiet and comfortable passage through the present life.

He that affects to be "greatest of all," must generally be, for some considerable time at least,

“the servant of all;” and, in this service, many humours must be gratified, many tedious attendances given, yea, perhaps, many little things done; nor is this only an irksome, but also an invidious employment; for, no sooner is a man perceived to have raised his views; but the jealousies of all around him are alarmed, and his opposers will probably be still more numerous than his competitors; for in this contest it frequently becomes necessary, not only to counteract the efforts of those who contend for the same prize, but also to guard against the wanton malice of the otherwise unconcerned spectators, whilst there is scarce any of them so insignificant as not to be able, by some ill office or other, to retard the progress, if not wholly to defeat the pretensions of the rising man; and how discouraging must be the attempt to work through the combined opposition of sourness and malevolence, of competition and envy! Yea then, what a temptation this (were a man’s own security and satisfaction to be his only concern) instead of wishing to be “spoken for to the King, or to be Captain of the Host,” to chuse to “dwell among his own people.”

Add to this, the insatiableness of it, moderation can never have the honour either of con-
tending

tending with, or subduing it, because they never meet together.

The pursuits of Ambition, though not so general, are yet as endless as those of riches, and equally extravagant, no one having ever yet thought that he had either power or empire sufficient. Upon their gaining an arduous summit, distant views arise, and they are as far removed from their imaginary point of happiness as ever, its trouble and fatigue is without end; how much therefore are the silent virtues of a good man in solitude to be preferred before all the noisy honours of active life?

Let us however suppose these and the like difficulties surmounted, and that the wishes of the worldly-minded and ambitious are to the utmost of their desires happily accomplished; but why do I say happily? Honour and exaltation, and worldly greatness, may be obtained even to the most possible summit of this life, and yet real happiness be at as great a distance as ever: in respect of this, he may be, and generally is, as much disappointed, as in the fatigues of his first acquisition.

Pomp and splendor satisfy not all those whom they surround, for the excess of delight palls the appetite oftener than it pleases it.

Pomp and grandeur appear large, and fill the eye when viewed at a distance, but (con-

trary to other objects of sight) grow less in proportion to the nearness of our approach to them.

Indeed an elevated situation is too airy to furnish out any solid entertainment to the mind of man, and he that is most in love with it is often of so peculiar a cast, that the small satisfaction which his acquisition might otherwise afford him lies at the mercy of every one that comes in the way.

Fine talents and eminent qualities are not sufficient of themselves to purchase the esteem and affection of men ; it is requisite moreover that no man applauds himself for them, nor makes too pompous a display of them ; for, if he assumes too great an ascendant, his merit will become “a rock of offence,” and be more to his prejudice than advantage, because we feel a secret indignation against those that eclipse us, and spare nothing to excuse ourselves from so ungrateful a superiority.

Perhaps they, who could not hinder his advancement, may however, by an omission of ceremony, especially by a settled refusal of respect, more than sufficiently embitter his enjoyment of it.

Let Haman be distinguished by marks of favour and advantage never so uncommon, “yet
“all these things will avail him nothing, so
“long

“long as he sees Mordecai the Jew sitting before him without due tokens of respect and honour.” In a word,

How is a man sure, when he hath gained these things, and is got to the summit of wealth and power, that the former will not expose him to the artifices of crafty deceivers, or the more dangerous assaults of outrageous spoilers? That the latter will not sacrifice him to the envy of the meaner, or to the jealousy of greater men? to the implacable malice of persecuted enemies, or to the sharp resentment of unrewarded friends? May not avarice and ambition, those insatiable and tormenting passions, which first put him upon the pursuit of greatness, still harass and disquiet him in the possession, so that he may lose all the satisfaction of what he has already gained, in the restless expectation of something future, or in the preservation of his present acquirements? Or, lastly, may he not, as is too common, grow giddy with the height he is raised to, and be tempted by his power to such acts of insolence and oppression, as may first expose him to the hatred of mankind, and end at last in his utter ruin? Whoever considers these, and such like hazards, to which the great things of this life may expose us, will have reason to think, that as God may sometimes, in mercy, oppose us

in

in our attempts to gain them, so may he also, in his anger, suffer men to be curst with prosperity; and to be undone by the success of their endeavours. The truth is,

Without a delight in God, there can be no real and substantial happiness. Life itself will be no better than a burthen, and its most honourable appendages as so many additions to our anxiety. But,

Were the possession of great things more satisfactory than they usually are, yet the precariousness of their tenure must make considerable abatements from the value of the purchase.

This might be evidenced in a thousand instances, and their unstableness confirmed.

The removal from an high degree of honour, power, and affluence, is generally far enough from being delightful.

Though the possession of "great things" can hardly yield pleasure, yet the parting with them is abundantly sufficient to administer pain; the enjoyment is vanity, and the loss thereof (in the utmost strictness of the letter) "vexation of spirit."

Such is the provision which a desire of great things usually makes for the ease and comforts of its votaries in this world. Let us then proceed to enquire,

Secondly,

Secondly, How they may be thought likely to affect our views of happiness in another?

Now, thus much may, I presume, be laid down as certain, that no station of God's appointment can be, in itself, evil, and as such absolutely to be avoided by ourselves, or condemned in others; the truth is, our condition hereafter will not be finally determined from our situation, but from our behaviour here.

In reference therefore to the point before us, great distinction should be made, because there is, in fact, a wide difference between the case of one who is called to these things rightly, and of another who, with eagerness and impetuosity, yea perhaps by treachery and violence, presseth into them.

If the former encounter difficulties, they are however upon duty, and after using their own honest endeavours, may humbly rely upon God for aid, and favourable allowances for their defect in the performance; whereas the latter, by "running without being sent," make themselves wholly answerable for consequences; and, as they are "following their own devices," they may justly be left, by their own wisdom and strength, to stand or fall; and, in how hazardous a situation they must then be, a few words may sufficiently illustrate. And here,

The

The super-addition of care, which increaseth with their increasing riches, and the various temptations which lie in the way to greatness, might very properly come under consideration; but,

I intend not to enumerate, much less to enlarge upon these, neither indeed will the time permit me to do more than just touch upon a few of those sins which too easily beset these men.

Such are luxury and intemperance, with all their train of ills, natural and moral, which usually attend upon them; such are pride and self-conceit, with insolence and haughtiness towards inferiors in general, and want of feeling for the distresses of the afflicted. But such (above all) is a dangerous forgetfulness of God, and a fatal neglect of the concerns of another world—"all which are sore evils under the sun."

Add to this, that the possession of "great things," at the same time that it thus endangers a man's virtue, doth also heighten his obligations to exemplary degrees of it. In proportion as his situation is advanced, his sphere of activity is enlarged, and the compass of his duty extended.

And, how awful a situation is this! how little to be courted! yea, rather how much to be

be dreaded ! especially when we look forward to that great day, when all these things must be strictly accounted for, when "mighty men," if not proportionably exemplary in goodness, "will be mightily tormented."

After what hath been said, it is hoped no one will misapprehend me as discouraging all attempts to advance their credit, or their stations in life ; no—there is an allowable, a commendable, a necessary ambition, of standing foremost in the rank of good men.

To sit still in a state of indolence and sloth, when there is a proper occasion for the exertion of our endowments would certainly be blameable.

All I would caution against is, that seeing the labour and evil, and many inconveniencies to which the desire of "great things" is exposed, we prudently regulate ourselves hereto, and not too immoderately seek after them ; not ambitiously to ape, if not exceed our superiors in wealth and vanity, whilst we contentedly give them the preference in virtue, and let them practice it without emulation.

Above all, that we use no indirect or unlawful means whereby to obtain them, seeing that we shall in no way profit, if we "gain even the whole world, and thereby lose our own souls."

If

If honourable methods therefore cannot, dishonourable ones must not make way for our advancement even to the greatest things; for vice, though accompanied with the highest titles, can dignify no man.

Tis not pomp or splendor alone that truly honours us, "but the good, the meek, and
"and humble spirit, which in the sight of God
"is of great price;" for "he that in these
"things serveth Christ, is accepted of God,
"and approved of men."

Were Angels, if they look into the ways of men, to give in their catalogue of worthies, how different would it be from that which any of our own species would draw up! We are dazzled with the splendor of titles, the ostentation of learning, and the noise of victories; they (on the contrary) see the philosopher in the cottage, the good and wise man, though humble.

A contemplation of God's works, a generous concern for the good of mankind, and unfeigned exercise of humility, only denominate men great and glorious.

Permit me to leave upon your minds one short reflection arising from the whole.

"Seek we great things then for ourselves?"
If we look no further than the present, the answer

swer (suggested by constant experience) must be "seek them not."

The pursuit is vexatious, the possession is unsatisfying, the tenure precarious, and the loss insupportable; and yet the same experience tells us, that something great we must seek, so long as any generosity remains within us, and we cannot help it; but then they are the great things of God, which concern our souls, and all eternity.

God hath provided these better things for us, purely because the world hath nothing worthy for us.

Nay, since he alone who made can also completely fill the capacities of our souls, he is graciously pleased to propose to us himself, for our exceeding great "reward and portion for ever."

Here then our desires may have their full scope; our ambition here can never exceed the dignity of its object; and therefore here should know no bounds.

The greatest things in this world cannot justify our earnestness, because the fashion of them passeth away. In the grave there is no distinction of persons; goodness only remaineth unextinguishable for ever; we may therefore both seek and strive for that glory and honour which is connected with immortality, and

which (with God) endureth to everlasting ages.

There needs no train of servants, no pomp or equipage to make good our passage to Heaven, but the graces only of an honest mind, "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

"The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces, the great globe itself, yea, all that it inherits shall dissolve, and like the baseless fabrick of a vision, leave not a wreck behind."

Honours and monuments, and all the works of vanity and ambition, are demolished and destroyed by time, but the reputation of virtue and wisdom only is venerable for ever; yea, the silent virtues of a good man in solitude are more amiable than all the noisy honours of active life; for virtue needs no outward pomp; her very countenance is so full of majesty, that the proudest pay her respect, and the profanest are awed by her presence.

Setting aside then the empty honours of this world, as of no avail to our everlasting concern, let us (as we are divinely counselled) "seek the honour that cometh from God only," in which there is no trouble, neither is it of fickle foundation, but, like the God it comes from, will endure for ever.

To

To conclude, " True greatness resideth not
" but in the soul, nor is there any true honour
" except in virtue.

" A mind disposed to virtue maketh great
" the possessor of it; and without titles it will
" raise him above the vulgar.

" All are not called to the guiding of the
" helm of state; neither are their armies to be
" commanded by every one. Do well in that
" which is committed to thy charge, and praise
" shall remain upon thee.

" Say not that difficulties are necessary to be
" conquered, or that labour and danger must
" be in the way to renown. The woman who
" is chaste, is she not praised? The man who
" is honest, deserveth he not to be honoured?"

" It is an honour to thy nature when wor-
" thily employed, but when thou directest it
" to wrong purposes, it shameth and destroyeth
" thee.

" He that is truly virtuous, loveth Virtue
" for herself; he disdaineth the vain applause
" which ambition aimeth after; therefore,

" Pursue that which is honourable, do that
" which is right, and the applause of thine
" own conscience will be more joy to thee than
" shouts of millions, who know not that thou
" deserveest them.

“ Endeavour to be fi
“ ever it be ; neither
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“ any dishonest or unw
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“ of the same.”

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be first in thy calling, whether let any one go before thee nevertheless, do not envy another, but improve thine

do not depress thy competitor by an unworthy method; strive to move him only by excelling thy contest for superiority be honour, if not with success. And verily thou shalt have praise

SERMON

64 SERMON LXXIII.

“ Endeavour to be first in thy calling, what-
“ ever it be ; neither let any one go before thee
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“ the merits of another, but improve thine
“ own talents.

“ Scorn also to depress thy competitor by
“ any dishonest or unworthy method ; strive to
“ raise thyself above him only by excelling
“ him ; so shall thy contest for superiority be
“ crowned with honour, if not with success.

“ Do well, and verily thou shalt have praise
“ of the same.”

SERMON

SERMON LXXIV.

Lowliness of Mind, in Opposition to
Ambition.

MATT. v. 3. *"Blessed are the Poor in Spirit,
"for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."*

IN these words we have recommended to us a virtue most opposite to that of ambition. Being already counselled "not to mind high things," we are here equally advised to "con-
"descend to men of low estate." "Blessed
"are the poor in spirit."

Humility and condescension are chief virtues of the Christian religion,

In speaking to them I shall observe the following methods:

First, I shall shew who are the persons here spoken of, and then,

Secondly, Wherein the present blessedness of such men consists, and what will be their

future reward. "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
"for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

By the poor in spirit some understand such as are of a low condition in the world; and this interpretation they ground upon a parallel text of St. Luke, where our Saviour makes the same promise to his Disciples, considered only as poor, and to them he opposes such as are rich and great in the world, pronouncing a woe against them.

"Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have
"received your consolation."

And it must indeed be granted, that there is a blessedness belonging to the poor, merely as poor; inasmuch as such are for the most part in a better preparation of mind to receive and embrace the Gospel than the rich are, as the Scripture testifieth in several places, and as was abundantly confirmed by experience in the first ages of Christianity, wherein (as the Apostle observes) "not many wise men after the
"flesh; nor many mighty, nor many noble
"were called." And to the same purpose is that of St. James: "Hath not God chosen the
"poor of this world, rich in faith; and heirs
"of the kingdom, which he hath promised to
"them that love him?" And our Saviour, to shew the difficulty of salvation to the rich, especially in those times of persecution, expresses

presses it by a proverbial phrase, signifying an impossibility: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

But, nevertheless, I do not think that our Saviour (in the text) did, by "poor in spirit," mean in general such as are poor and low in the world, it being certain that the poor, merely as such, and without any other condition or virtuous qualification, have no claim or title to the kingdom of Heaven, seeing they but too often become so by idleness or profuseness, as well as sometimes by adhering to innocence, and through the providence of God.

And there is no ground, I am sure, either from Scripture or reason, to believe that the poverty which is occasioned either by our negligence or extravagance entitles either to a blessing here, or to a reward hereafter. Besides,

If our Saviour had here meant only such as are poor, and all such, by whatsoever means or chance they become so, the addition of that other word "in spirit," had been perfectly needless and superfluous; nay, and not only so, but it would have been destructive of its own intent and meaning.

Rejecting therefore, for these reasons, this interpretation, I take it for granted, that the promise of the kingdom of Heaven here made
by

by our Saviour to "the poor in spirit," is made to a state and temper of mind, rather than to a state and condition of life; for,

In this there is manifestly no virtue at all, it not being a matter of our own choice, whether we will be rich or poor in this world, that depending wholly upon the pleasure and good providence of God. "It is he that maketh
"poor and maketh rich, that bringeth low and
"lifteth up: yea, the rich and the poor meet
"together, the Lord is the maker of them all."

But, to be of a good temper and disposition of mind is indeed a virtue, and a subject proper for reward.

Rejecting the former interpretation therefore, I shall fix upon this, which may fairly be supposed to be meant by our Saviour in this place, viz. humility and all lowliness of mind, in opposition to all arrogance and ambition.

And there is an easy reason to be given why this temper of mind should be called "poverty of spirit," viz. because it is a temper which poverty and lowness of condition naturally brings a man to, and which also best suits that state; for,

Though pride indeed be unbecoming any man, how high soever his station, or plentiful his estate be; yet of all persons it least be-
comes

comes those who are poor, and low in the world.

The virtne then to which our Saviour annexeth a blessedness, and promises the kingdom of Heaven, is an humble opinion of ourselves, in opposition to high conceits, and an aspiring self-presuming air, not ascribing to ourselves things that are not, nor at any time seeking the pre-eminence.

This is to be lowly in heart; or, as our Saviour here expresses it, to be "poor in spirit," i. e. when our modesty is not feigned and pretended, but is real, and from the mind.

For humility is not properly a virtue of the carriage or of the tongue, but of the heart and the spirit, "in the spirit and not in the letter, "whose praise is not of men, but of God." "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Indeed,

If we are really possessed of this disposition before us, the principle within us will most certainly shew forth itself in its natural fruits and effects in our outward lives and conversations; particularly, if we are endued herewith, we shall with ease bear all the affronts and indignities which are unjustly put upon us, and shall readily submit our judgment to others, especially of our betters: we shall not greedily seek after honour and applause, and preferment from men, but shall without reluctance

tance content ourselves in every state of life in which it shall please God to call us.

This is to be "poor in spirit," as it is opposed to ambition, self-conceit, and vain glory.

Secondly, I am to shew wherein the present blessedness of those consists who are thus "poor in spirit," what will be their future reward, and what assurance they have that they shall be so blessed there.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

First, I shall shew the present blessedness of those who are endued herewith, and they are blessed above others in sundry respects, viz. as being by this excellent temper of mind, and the lovely fruits and effects of it, rendered amiable and pleasing to all that know them. There is nothing that so adorns, and sets us off, or qualifies us for, and entitles us to respect and honour, as true humility.

The Apostle calls it the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great price, both in the sight of God and man."

Men naturally reverence those who have humble thoughts of themselves; and on such as do not hunt after honour they generally bestow it more abundantly; yea, "honour, saith the wise man, shall uphold the humble in spirit;" whereas, on the contrary, arrogance
and

S E R M O N LXXIV. 21

and haughtiness of mind, proud and ambitious behaviour, instead of procuring men respect, naturally throw them into the contempt and hatred of all. But,

Secondly, Humble-minded men are also blessed above others, because they are more at ease and quiet in their own minds.

Being of an humble spirit, and thinking but moderately of themselves, they are free from ambition, envy, anger, and revenge, and other such-like boisterous and troublesome passions, which render such as are possessed with them very uneasy and unhappy, in the midst of all their affluence of good things that the world can afford.

An humble-minded man, on the contrary, whatever his outward condition and circumstances in the world are, is calm, is contented, and thankful, and envies not the condition of those above him.

The man who moderates his wishes from reason and choice, and is not resigned from sourness, distaste, and disappointment, doubles all the pleasures of life. But,

Thirdly, He is blessed above others also, in that he is in a better preparation and disposition of mind to receive and embrace the Gospel, and to submit himself to the rules and precepts of it; and in this sense the words following

lowing may be understood,—“theirs is the
“kingdom of Heaven.”

It is evident that this phrase, “the kingdom
“of Heaven” is often used in Scripture in this
sense, viz. to signify the kingdom, that is, the
Church of Christ, agreeable to that of our
Saviour: “Verily I say unto you, except ye
“be converted, and become as little children,
“ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of
“Heaven: Whosoever therefore shall humble
“himself as this little child, the same is great-
“est in the kingdom of Heaven.” And again,
“Suffer little children to come unto me,
“and forbid them not, for of such is the king-
“dom of Heaven;” i. e. none else are my true
disciples, none else are the subjects of my spi-
ritual kingdom, but they only, who in their
innocency and humility, do resemble these in-
fants in all lowliness of mind.

Fourthly, Another instance of the present
blessedness of those who are thus “poor in spi-
“rit” is, that the promise of grace is made to
them, to guide and direct them in their way,
and to assist them in working out their salvation.

“God resisteth the proud, but he giveth
“grace to the humble.” “He scorneth the
“scorners, but he giveth grace unto the lowly.”

As we have thus seen what is the present
blessedness of those who are thus “poor in
“spirit,”

“spirit,” we will proceed to see what will be their future reward, and to shew the claim and title which such have to the promise which is here made to them: “Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven;” i. e. such and such only as are endued with this “poverty of spirit,” this humility of mind, have a right and title, by virtue of God’s gracious promise, to the eternal happiness of the other world; and

The certainty of this depends partly upon what has been already said; for, if none but such are Christ’s true disciples, and members of his kingdom of grace here, then none but they can be partakers of his kingdom of glory hereafter; for “whom he justifies, them also will he glorify;” and partly, upon the many express promises of Heaven and eternal happiness, which are made to those who are of this blessed temper.

“He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;” so we are told in general by our Saviour. And “learn of me (says he again), for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

As the happiness of Heaven is peculiarly annexed and promised to this grace, so also are the degrees of happiness in Heaven to the several measures and degrees of it. The lowlier we

14 S E R M O N LXXIV.

are here in our own eyes, the higher shall we be hereafter in God's favour, and our crown will be so much the more bright and glorious.

For (as saith our Lord) "whosoever shall
"humble himself as a little child, the same
"shall be greatest in the kingdom of Heaven."

The reason why so many and high privileges are made to the virtue here before us is evident, it being, in itself, not only a condition, but also an indispensable qualification for the enjoyment of the happiness of the next life.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and
"drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy
"in the Holy Ghost."

It was pride and haughty ambition that first brought down the apostate angels from Heaven, and is therefore what will equally keep all who inherit their folly therefrom.

"Every thing that hurts or offends" (as pride, arrogance, and ambition in general do)
"will be gathered out of that holy mountain,"
and none but those who are (with the holy Jesus) meek and lowly will inherit therein.

Upon the whole, "Blessed are the poor in
"spirit," i. e. such as are meek and lowly in
their own eyes.

In this world they are much better on that account than others, for they live in greater esteem; they are better beloved, and more respected;

S E R M O N LXXIV. 75

fected; they are more at ease and quiet in
 their own minds; they are also in a better dis-
 position for virtue and religion, and are more
 fitly qualified to partake of the divine grace;
 and after this life is over, they will be highly
 exalted, as being the only qualified for it, and
 consequently will be crowned with glory, ho-
 nour, and immortality, "for theirs is the
 " kingdom of Heaven."

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SERMON

SERMON LXXV.

Sin of immoderate Self Love.

II. TIM. iii. 2. "*Lovers of themselves.*"

SINCE it is certain that there is an innocent love of ourselves, and yet self-love is here condemned, and has the foremost place in a long catalogue of vices, it will be proper to state the difference between them.

That there is a love of ourselves which is natural and necessary, and consequently innocent, is a plain truth, and yet such as hath been opposed and denied; men, in their refinements on religion, vainly pretending that self respect destroys all the merit and virtue of our actions, and that wholly to counteract the inclinations of our nature, is an acceptable service to God.

But this is wholly mistaking the nature of things: God, in his goodness, delights not in
in

in the punishment of his creatures, and "hath given us all things richly to enjoy."

Our beings are necessarily attended with the love of them; to preserve, moderately to cheer, and continually to support them, therefore, becomes our duty.

This nature implants in us, and to this it leads us.

Our reason, which judges of good and evil, teaches us the same under these limitations, that we do no wrong to any man, nor thereby transgress the law of God, nor exceed the bounds of due decorum.

This love of ourselves, which is natural to us, and which reason confirms in us, is also plainly allowed in the Scriptures.

'Tis agreed on all hands, that the writings, which we have hitherto revered as divine, do every where suppose a view to private happiness in every man, and accordingly address themselves to it, in their exhortations to goodness; promises and threats make as great a part in them as commands and prohibitions.

There (as by the divine appointment) our duty and our interest are inseparably connected, and we are moved to obedience by such motives, and deterred by such threats, as are plainly addressed to, and do most strongly work upon, the passion of man.

Besides these things, God hath placed us in a world abounding with all good things suited to our natural appetites and desires, which surely He would not have done, unless he had intended that we might seek and enjoy them under due regulation; yea, and hath made this the standard of our love to our neighbour, which therefore must be allowable, as being the rule of all our social practice.

As to a man's desiring his own good then, his own welfare and happiness, it is not a matter of choice, but of necessity; yea, as necessary as his being, and is woven in our very frame and constitution. This is one of the primary laws of nature, and its obligation (being founded upon the authority of God himself) is sacred and inviolable; and, when rightly understood, and duly regulated, is of infinite service.

This principle of self love, considered absolutely and in itself, is so far from being sinful, or any way blameable in the sight of God, that all religion is chiefly founded upon it, and plainly supposes it.

The infinite wisdom of God would never have made the promises of eternal bliss, and the threatenings of everlasting misery, the sanction of his laws, but in consideration of, and with regard to this principle, as what would most powerfully

S E R M O N LXXV. 79

powerfully and prevalently dispose us to aspire after that happiness, and avoid that misery, by pursuing the methods prescribed for these ends.

This shews the absurdity of that enthusiastic notion of some mystic divines, and others who have borrowed it from them, viz. that we are bound to love and serve God without any respect to the reward of our duty, or the benefit and advantage that may accrue to us from it; contrary to the great examples we have before us, not only of Moses, "who had a respect to the recompence of reward," in refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, but also of the son of God himself, "who endured the cross, and despised the shame, for the joy of the glory that was set before him."

The truth is, self love, according as it is well or ill understood and applied, is the chief source of all the moral good and evil that is in the world. So long as it fixes itself upon a right object, the true and real happiness of our nature, and is subject to, and directed by right reason, and the laws of God, it is the great principle of duty; which whatever corrupt nature may insinuate to the contrary, is no more in effect than another word for happiness itself.

But when it is misapplied to an undue object, and a man gives way to his irregular passions and appetites, and the impure pleasures
which

which tend to the gratification of a carnal sensual mind, then all regard to God and man must give way thereto, and hence it is that all impiety towards God, and all the violation of the laws of justice and charity towards men, derive their original.

There is an affection then for ourselves which is irregular and pernicious; our reasonable wants, yea, and easy accommodations, we are allowed, nay, commanded, to pursue and provide for. But it is an esteem and fondness for ourselves, arising from evil causes, exceeding its due bounds, hurting others, and hurtful to ourselves, that the Apostle hath here a particular regard to; of which I shall now speak, together with the evil thereof, and the effects it produces. And,

First, Self love is vicious, when it leads us to judge too favourably of our own faults, and may be easily seen and known hereby.

The deformity of vice is so conspicuous, that there is no one but would either avoid it, or, if guilty, screen himself from the eyes of all beholders; which we sometimes do, by mitigating the malignity of it, under milder terms and softer appellations.

Thus (according to self love) covetousness is frugality; selfishness is oeconomy; profusion liberality; ambition, a generous desire of excellency;

telling; censoriousness, impartiality; severity, justice; and the spirit of persecution, religious zeal.

Sometimes it represents our sins as weaknesses and infirmities, and as the effect of natural constitution, and therefore more deserving pity than blame; and sometimes it excuses them, on account of the intent, pretending that some good or other is promoted by them, and that the motive and end sanctify the means, or at least greatly lessen the atrocity of them.

It leads us to set our good in opposition to our bad qualities, and to persuade ourselves that what is laudable in us far outweighs what is evil. It teaches us to compare ourselves with others, and thence to draw favourable and flattering conclusions, because we are not so bad as several we can name. It shews us the general corruption that is in the world, and represents it worse than it is, and therefore that we must not hope, and need not endeavour to be very remarkable and singularly good.

Again.—Our self love may further be discovered, as being irregular, when we think too well of our righteousness, and over-value our good actions, and are pure and clean in our own eyes, and visibly censure the faults of others.

But

But most especially may it be seen, when it makes us seek our own, in opposition to, or to the prejudice of the public good; when we sever our own interests from that of the rest of mankind, and have no regard to the welfare of others, further than it is subservient to some selfish designs of our own, and can only be moved to do good when the greatest advantage is likely to accrue to ourselves; when we make our worldly interests, convenience, humour, ease, or pleasure, the great and sole end of all our actions, when the necessities of others pass by unregarded, when want and misery rather move our scorn than pity, and we live wholly for ourselves.

Here not only grace but humanity also is extinguished.

This is selfishness, a very disingenuous and sordid kind of self love, and is what destroys every end of happiness and mutual good-will among men, than which surely nothing can be of greater or more pernicious consequence.

St. Paul makes it a certain sign, and an indication of perilous times, when men shall become "lovers of themselves;" and the reason is evident, because from that bitter and poisonous root spring all those noxious humours that disturb the peace and happiness of human society, and dissolve that cement of mutual love

love and charity, wherein the safety and security of mankind chiefly consists.

For, what are all those unsocial passions of pride and envy, and ambition and covetousness, &c. but the same evil spirit of an inordinate self love under so many different shapes, and therefore wherever this pernicious spirit, the enemy of peace, and the bane of society prevails, "there must of necessity also be confusion and strife, and every evil work."

Another reason to dissuade herefrom is, the evils which must flow from it.

This narrow and fordid principle prompts a man to make all interfering interests give way to and concentre in his own, than which nothing can be more base in itself, or more repugnant to the true temper and spirit of the Gospel.

He that makes all his care and concern, all his projects and designs, thus to centre in himself, and has no regard to any man's interests or happiness but his own, such a man defeats all the ends of society, and makes himself a common enemy to mankind, and justly exposes himself to the hatred and contempt of all that know him; for though there may be some who have so far corrupted those natural principles which dispose them for society, as to be able to make tolerable shift to allow of this vicious self love in themselves, yet there are

none

none but who detest it in others; for all men expect and look for a kind and friendly entertainment, and are displeased and uneasy to meet with any disappointment, how partial soever this base selfish spirit may make them in their returns.

St. Paul says, in the chapter before us, that "in the last days perilous times shall come, "for men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers," and guilty of many other crimes which he there mentions.

The Apostle seems not to have placed self love foremost here in this catalogue of vices, undesigned and by chance, but with a good and real intent, because it is the root of much evil, and the parent of many sins.

Against God it is the occasion of many and great offences. Hereby we prefer our pleasure and our interest (as we call it) to his favour; thence ariseth disobedience to his laws, when they cross our inclination, or require any thing disagreeable to our will, or when the observance of them exposes us to any inconvenience.

Hence also will arise impatience and discontent, and dishonourable thoughts of divine providence, when things happen contrary to our desire.

As

As we have too high an opinion of ourselves, we therefore ascribe all the good which we enjoy to our own activity and merit, and all the evil which befalls us, to the cross dealings of God towards us.

To our neighbour it is an insufferable evil, for hereby we grow covetous, rapacious, proud, insolent, malicious, ungrateful, and uncharitable.

Such are the effects which an inordinate self-love produces, though not in all generally alike. It works differently upon different tempers as the causes are greater or less, as it hath more or fewer disorders of the mind to encounter, and as it is counterbalanced by more or less good dispositions.

But some or other of these faults always arise from it.

Thus it appears that self-love is a dangerous corruption, which also may be further proved by this observation, viz. that Christ absolutely required of all who would join themselves to him, a virtue directly contrary to it, viz. self-denial. "Whosoever (says he) will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

This is a commandment which he who loves himself in an undue measure cannot possibly obey.

In a word, as this vicious self-love is thus base and unworthy in itself, and also productive of so many ill effects, so nothing can be more opposite to that truly noble and generous temper of universal benevolence which Christianity inspires, and requires of all its true and sincere professors.

To conclude, How great must the condemnation of such creatures be at the great day of account, when it shall be required of them what uses they have made of the opportunities put into their hands, and are able only to say, we have lived but to ourselves; we have circumscribed all the power thou hast given us into one narrow selfish compass; “we have heaped up treasures for ourselves, and for those who come after us,” without knowing who, or what use they will make of, or power they will have over them.

How can such selfish pleadings expect any other but the most dreadful sentence of “Depart from me, ye cursed.”

“Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, (holy and beloved) bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering, in honour preferring one another.” Yea, “Love as brethren,” and “look not every one at his own things only, but on the things of others also,” and “do good unto all men as ye have opportunity.”

S E R M O N LXXVI.

General Benevolence, in Opposition to
Selfishness.

GALL. vi. 10. "*Do good unto all Men.*"

IT is the peculiar glory of the religion we profess, that, at the same time that it tends to inform our understandings, it meliorates our social nature, and, with irresistible energy, inclines us to regard both God and man with sentiments of fervent love. The principle of benevolence is represented to us as the great characteristic of the Gospel, and we should act wisely, if we always estimated our progress therein by our improvement in the practice of it, which is a virtue so indispensibly necessary to the formation of the real Christian, that all other acquirements, of whatever nature they may be, are not of real worth, if the heart is found a stranger to its power. "Do good unto all men."

We are certainly made to do kind offices, and every deserving man hath a right to expect and require it from us.

Human laws cannot indeed easily fix this claim, but men may supply this defect by their slighting and censuring all offenders herein, all who are selfish and ill-natured; whereas, they who are truly conformable, and (according to the greatness of their soul) lay themselves out for the general good, will infallibly secure to themselves the general love and esteem.

This excellent disposition is set forth to us by the Apostle, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, under the name of "Charity;" where, that he might give us at once both a just idea of the worth and excellency of this noble and divine principle, and also certain marks, whereby, upon looking into our own hearts and actions, we might readily discover whether we are endowed with it or not, he proceeds to describe it to us by several of its distinguishing properties, viz. that "it seeketh not her own," "but rejoiceth in the general good," in opposition to that narrow and selfish spirit that disposeth men to intend the gratification of their own humours and interests only, as the chief motive to, and the ultimate end of all their actions.

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The recommending to you therefore the great duty of general benevolence, in opposition to that pernicious principle which we have already exploded, will not, I presume, prove either an unprofitable, or an unseasonable undertaking.

And the method I shall proceed herein shall be,

First, To ascertain and explain the due sense of the words, in the full latitude of their expression.

Secondly, Endeavour by some proper arguments to excite you to a careful and conscientious discharge of the same. And,

First, "To do good," is to do whatever may tend to promote the good and happiness of our neighbour, to prevent any peril or misfortune he may be exposed to, or to deliver him out of any circumstances of adversity which he may be in. The good or evil natural to us in this world either respects our spiritual or our temporal state. Those which respect our spiritual state being of the last consequence, and on which an eternity of unspeakable happiness or misery depends. The most noble and generous instance of "doing good" to others, is to contribute what we can to make them good, to prevent their falling into sin, or to recover them when fallen.

'Twas upon this design of doing good (in saving us from our sins) that the Son of God took upon him the nature of man, and the blessed name of Jesus; and, in imitation of this great and glorious example, the duties of beneficence, as they respect the spiritual advantage and edification of our neighbour, consist in our charitable addresses to them, according to their different spiritual wants and defects.

The Apostle seems to comprehend all the good and religious offices we owe to our neighbour in that one direction, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient towards all."

But further, to "do good" also respects the temporal advantage and welfare of our neighbour.

And here again the several acts of our beneficence are to be suited to his several exigences, whether it be our advice or assistance, complying in every thing with his reasonable request.

These indeed are acts of beneficence, which arise from a natural greatness and generosity of mind, and cannot well fail of exerting themselves in all persons who merely consider what is owing to the image of God, and the dignity of human nature; yea, these are they, in comparison of which all those supernatural gifts, whether

whether of prophecy or of tongues, or of miracles, that the Corinthians so much magnified themselves upon, are, in the Apostle's esteem, to be accounted as nothing.

But further, Of the extensiveness of the duty here required from us—"Do good unto all men."

This duty is general and universal. No man, however distant or differing from us in opinion or interest, being to be secluded the share of our good offices, when need and necessity present him before us: This our blessed Saviour, by that wise decision of his, in the case of the good Samaritan, hath plainly shewn us.

From the largeness of our mind, therefore, we are to comprehend in our wishes the happiness of all men; and from the generosity of our heart we are to endeavour to promote it—always remembering that "no man liveth to himself," and that all mankind are but one great family, descended originally from the same parents; that every individual is a branch from the same stock, and consequently hath a kindred right to the protection of each other. "Though we more particularly regard the household of faith," and those more immediately dear unto us, yet even the most distant part of mankind are not to be excluded the share of our benevolence, but "as we have opportunity,

“opportunity, we must do good unto all men.”

Having thus explained the due import and meaning of the words before us, I shall now,

Secondly, Endeavour to excite you to the due observance of the same by what arguments can be produced; and,

First, We are obliged to the duty before us from the law of our being.

It is a doctrine taught by reason, and confirmed by revelation, that man is a social creature: This is the original order and constitution of his nature, and their reciprocal manifold wants and necessities do supply the place of all arguments to prove it.

There is no living in this world without an exchange of civil offices, and the need we have hereto is the greatest motive we can urge to the performance of the duty before us. Our food, our cloathing, our convenience of habitation, our protection from the injuries, and enjoyment of the comforts and pleasures of life; all these we owe to the assistance of others, and and could not enjoy but in the bands of society. “The King himself is served from the field.” The most exalted are not sufficient for their own happiness, without the concurrence of their fellow creatures; how much less capable then

then must the meanest of them be to this purpose?

It is our duty therefore to be a friend to mankind, as it is our interest that mankind should be friendly to us.

The various actions of mortal men, discordant as they may seem to the incurious mind, are nevertheless directed by the hand of Providence to the general good. The relations of life are indeed numerous, but the common bond is one, and that bond is social love. But,

Secondly, We are further induced hereto from the nature of God, "who is good, and doth good, and whose tender mercies are over all his works."

The infinite perfections of the divine nature are the proper standard and pattern of all worth and excellency in the creature, and which therefore must necessarily rise or fall in proportion to the resemblance it bears to that divine original, whereof it is the copy and transcript.

Though all the attributes of God are proper objects for our love, reverence, and adoration, yet the infinite goodness and benignity of the divine nature, that extends to, and diffuseth itself (like an universal soul) through the whole creation, is, of all others, the fittest for our imitation.

It therefore plainly follows that we cannot do ourselves more honour, or our Creator a more acceptable service, than by a studious imitation of his most glorious example, by doing good to all about us, and spreading abroad our benign influence through the whole space of our activity. God hath endued us with noble powers and faculties to enable us, in a human way, to transcribe his glorious perfections, and often, as it were, to supply his place to our fellow creatures; wisdom to instruct the ignorant; power to protect the weak; and riches to administer to the necessities of our brethren in need; in any of which, while we are employed, we are performing the best part of our duty, and (as it were) doing his business in the world, and become as Gods to our fellow creatures.

For, as the planets that receive their light from the sun do not absorb it in themselves, but disperse it upon other bodies, so are we bound kindly to impart to others whatever God in mercy hath communicated to us, and to reflect upon every creature beneath us the comfortable beams of the great sun of the world, that gives life and happiness to all things.

As God therefore hath enlarged our opportunities, we should enlarge also our wills, and
delight

delight in dispensing to others a portion of that happiness which we ourselves have so plentifully received at the hands of God. Then shall we not be useless in our generation, nor stand as single marks of God's goodness to his creatures; but (though nothing worth in ourselves) shall give signification by our places, and multiply the blessings of God around us, who hath distinguished us by so fair a lot.

When God blesses us with abundance, 'tis not sufficient to bear a grateful sense of his favours in our minds, or to wait the being called to do good; we should make it our business and our study, at proper times, to seek out such of our fellow creatures as labour under calamity and affliction, and, as far as prudence directs, make them partakers of the bounty of Heaven, at all times esteeming the opportunity of doing a good office a sufficient call, and the need of it a sufficient claim.

But, though all men are not blessed with the same means and opportunities, yet most men have some power to do good; and the less power we have, the more careful should we be not to lose any occasion of exerting it; for, in proportion to our power, be it more or less, we shall be expected to account for the use and abuse of it.

Accordingly, it was some of the last advice of a wise and good father to his son, "Be merciful after thy power; if thou hast much, give plentifully; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little, for so gatherest thou to thyself a good reward against the day of adversity."

It happens indeed to be the case of some (and I would to God it were less common) to be so humbled and afflicted in their outward circumstances, that they can only be the objects of that charity and compassion which, if it had pleased God to bless them with the good things of this life, they would gladly have reached out to others. To these it may be offered as just matter of consolation, that by their indigent condition they are exempted from the necessity of accounting for the use of riches; but withal they must remember, that there are many instances of duty, wherein the poorest man alive may supply the necessities, and administer to the wants of others.

To feed the hungry, and to cloath the naked, to distribute among the poor those blessings and conveniencies which they want through the affluence of others, are doubtless great and shining instances; but they are by no means the only instances of compassion; nor are riches the only talents committed to our care for the exercise

exercise of Christian charity. Though we cannot be helpful to our brethren in the greater instances, yet is there no other way? Have we never an opportunity to admonish the wicked, to instruct the ignorant, or to comfort the afflicted? Are there not many good offices that one may do to another, without the least injury to himself? What is it that causeth one to be esteemed a good, and another a bad man, amongst us? Is it not the granting or denying those common favours, which may well be spared without hurt or damage to ourselves? If so, what excuse can it be to say we have no riches to bestow, when we deny even what we have to give? When we refuse to afford our brethren in distress that comfort, which is all that our present circumstances will allow?

One would think the common wants and necessities of our nature (from which none of us can pretend to be exempted) should knit us all together in the bands of love, and dispose us to combine, if for no better reason, yet, at least, for the ease and convenience we should find in promoting each other's good.

But where can we find a greater want of charity than among those who stand most in need of it? As if the hardships of poverty were too little of themselves, some of those who feel it do but add to its afflictions, grieving others by

their unfriendly treatment, and themselves by their uncharitable tempers. While these things are so, it is in vain for them to talk of the good they would have done, if God's providence had trusted them with the management and use of riches; for, as sure as they are envious and malicious in their want, they would have been equally insolent and unkind in plenty; as sure as they now murmur at the good of others, they would then have been indifferent to their distress. The same principle would still have followed them through all fortunes and circumstances in life, and he that has so little love and benevolence in his temper, so little will and inclination to do good, as to lose the few and small opportunities he has, would have lost them if they had been more and greater.

“He that hath not been faithful over a few things, is not fit to be ruler over many things, nor shall he ever enter into the joy of his Lord.”

“See then that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently:” “Do good unto all men as ye have opportunity;” yea, “to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Thus forcible are the reasons, and thus strong

strong the obligations we all lie under, barely as we are men (from our own nature, and from the nature of God), to love to do good, and to assist one another; but still stronger are the arguments, and still greater are our obligations as we are Christians, to this duty.

Our blessed Saviour hath, from a law of nature, passed it into a revealed law, and hath often repeated it, as though it was his favourite precept, and as though he had the greatest concern for it, and did, in a particular manner, rejoice to see us practice it.

The Gospel in every page exhorts us to suppress each rising passion, which opposes itself to our neighbour's happiness; to sacrifice our own emolument to his advantage, and to subdue the hostile spirit of the injurious person by accumulated acts of undeserved kindness. The great founder of our religion "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." His love was as universal as mankind, daily overflowing for their present, as well as their future good and welfare: "He went about doing good."

As the doctrine and practice of our heavenly Teacher are express to this purpose, and bind us under the strongest obligations hereto, so do his Apostles every where imitate this great ex-

ample, and pressingly inculcate the same: "Charity is the end of the commandment—is the fulfilling of the law." How often, and how pathetically doth St. John, the beloved Disciple, urge this duty! How doth he delight to dwell upon the endearing subject, as if it could no more fail him here on earth, than it will hereafter in Heaven. It is every where made the proper badge and cognizance of our holy profession, by which alone we may know ourselves, or be known of others, to be Christ's disciples, and is represented to us by the Apostle as that which alone can give us any evidence of our having an interest in God and Christ. "Beloved (saith he), let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God." And again,

"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, for hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of that loving temper and spirit of his." Again, "We know (says he) that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."

We have many texts strongly persuading to the duty before us. "We ought not to please ourselves (saith the great Apostle), but every one his neighbour for good to edification;" and this injunction he enforces with the example

ample of Christ, "for even Christ pleased not "himself," but for the glory of God, and good of mankind, patiently endured the contradiction and reproaches of sinners against himself, and laid down his life a ransom for them. Again,

In his epistle to the Philippians he charges us "to look not every one at his own things, "but every man also at the things of others;" and, in another place, (speaking of the use of Christian liberty) he lays down this rule,— "Let no man seek his own, but every man "another's good: and, in my text, "Do "good unto all men."

The whole Christian religion is, in fact, an institution of love, viz. of the love of God to man, and of man to his fellow creatures. Our blessed Saviour so strongly recommends this duty, that he even looks upon all offices of charity and compassion to the poor as instances of kindness to himself; yea, he even makes the final sentence of the last judgment to depend upon it.*

Inexpressible therefore must be the satisfaction of a charitable person in his last hours. Those comforts which he gave to the afflicted, to the poor, and to the sick, will then spring up in his own bosom: "Because he delivered

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* Matt. xxv. 33, &c.

" the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and
 " him that had none to help him ; because he
 " was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame,
 " and made the widow's heart to sing for joy ;
 " therefore (he may add) the blessing of him
 " that was ready to perish is now come upon
 " me."

The reason why this duty is so much insisted
 on in the Christian institution is, because it
 improves human nature to the highest degree it
 is capable, and because it is the temper and ge-
 nius of Heaven, and will alone prepare us for
 those blessed abodes.

Renounce therefore, O Christian, (whatever
 be thy rank or station) all attachment to thy
 sordid self-interest, and to those unworthy
 cares which would allure thee from an animated
 discharge of the functions of thy proper call-
 ing, and be studious to employ each important
 hour in the exercise of those generous, those
 manly virtues, which are at once thy duty, and
 thy exceeding great reward ; which is another
 consideration whereby to enforce the duty be-
 fore us, viz. the use and advantage of it to the
 world in general, and to each of us in parti-
 cular.

The importance of a social spirit to the hap-
 piness of society, the necessity of mutual friend-
 liness among creatures so mutually dependant ;

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of compassion in a world so full of misery; of a mild and forgiving temper amidst so much frailty and ignorance, need not be proved, and, one would think, cannot easily be overlooked.

The heaviest sufferings of life, I believe, on enquiry, will be found to flow from want of good will, and care to shew it.

What felicity therefore would arise from men's becoming universally reasonable, humane, and courteous; attentive to the interests and inclinations, to the hopes and fears, to the wants and sorrows of one another? But,

Not to amuse ourselves with the vain expectation of every one's acting thus, let each person only think what beneficial effects to those about him would follow from his own doing it.

Good nature, though expressed but in the slightest intercourses of life, gives pleasure, and encourages to duty; and whatever hath an immediate or continual influence on the happiness of others, be it in ever so trifling instances, must, on the whole, have a much greater effect than we are apt to imagine.

Even the lesser demonstrations, therefore, of "obliging condescension in superiors; of "respectfulness and deference in inferiors; of "desire to please, and willingness to be pleased "amongst equals," are matters highly worth regarding;

regarding; in some or other of which we can every one of us be good to all around us, and it is the only goodness that most of them want from us : But,

No one either needs, or ought to confine himself to such narrow bounds. Opportunities of exercising it, and those no contemptible ones, will offer themselves to every man, be his condition in the world almost what it will.

Those of distinguished rank do the most extensive and important service to their fellow-creatures, when they recommend the practice of religion, of virtue, and prudence, by their example, and enforce it by authority.

Persons engaged in a life of business have considerable and frequent opportunities of shewing valuable kindness to numbers, at one time or other, in their respective professions.

They, whom a better understanding or longer experience have made abler judges of any breach of conduct than others, what opportunities have they of directing the ignorant, warning the thoughtless, and setting the mistaken right, where perhaps an error persisted in might be fatal to them for ever. But,

Above most others, they to whom God hath intrusted riches, have obvious and daily opportunities of doing good, by extending bounty to the poor—under which name, though all
ought

ought to be included whose circumstances are too strait for the station in which they are obliged to appear, yet the lowest part of the world hath undoubtedly, in general, by much the strongest title to the benefit of that denomination; for the distresses of these, when helpless through age or infirmity, or sunk under the burthen of a numerous family to feed and cloath, are heavy to a degree, of which they who see nothing around them but plenty and chearfulness, usually think little; and yet they are bound to think often and seriously, that our Maker's providence hath not permitted so great inequalities of condition in the human species, for one part of them to languish in misery, and the other to look down with contempt upon them. "God accepteth not
 "the persons of princes, nor regardeth the
 "the rich more than the poor, for they are all
 "the works of his hands;" and his gracious intention was, that the virtues of beneficence on the one hand, and gratitude on the other, should be exercised, that the joy both of doing and receiving good might be mutually among men. But further,

Not only to the world in general, but to ourselves also in particular, is the duty before us of beneficial effect, as it fills us with comfort and self complacency, and procures to us the

the kind assistance and respect of others, and betters our everlasting condition.

The wise author of our beings hath kindly formed us all with a natural tendency for each other, which, as it gives us pain on the knowledge of the miseries of our fellow creatures, unless we wickedly harden ourselves against them, so it rewards us when we relieve them with the sweetest joy that we are capable of experiencing; a joy that is neither succeeded by uneasy reflections, nor that vanishes quickly into nothing like most others, but which the heart dwells upon with lasting delight, and humble self-approbation.

Yea, there is something so satisfactory and pleasing to reflect on the being able to administer comfort and relief to those who stand in need of it, as infinitely of itself rewards the beneficent mind, known only to the benign and liberal. But further,

As the opposite temper naturally makes men uneasy to themselves, and troublesome to all with whom they converse, and in consequence of that exposes them to the hatred and aversion of others—so, contrarywise, the goodness and benignity of a soul, thus duly influenced by this principle, as it naturally diffuseth a peculiar sweetness and serenity into him, and makes his very countenance to shine, so it attracts the
esteem

esteem and good will of all that know him, and who have particularly felt the effects of his goodness; and as he is found ready, on all occasions, to forego every selfish regard for the good of his neighbour, so he is most likely to meet with suitable returns of kindness and goodwill from them; yea, we may affirm, more likely, than he that regards and values no man but himself. Good-will to others gives us the surest claim that any thing can give to good will in return, the proofs of which we may easily come to want on many occasions.

Though the world, or even those persons in it whom we have served, recompense us ever so ill, yet not the smallest kind action that we have either done or designed shall be lost, for God sees them all, and will be proportionably gracious, not only to the virtues, but even to the failings of those who have made it their faithful care to shew the mercy which they hope to receive.

If then (instead of mutual exasperations and narrow self-contractedness) the spirit of kindness and benevolence prevailed as universally among us, as it is every man's interest, as well as duty, to endeavour it, how happy and pleasant would the course of life be, from what it is now too generally found? Instead of being deaf and blind to the necessities of others, yea, injuring

injuring and exasperating their brethren, men would then become guardian angels to each other, to promote and advance one another's happiness.

This happy conduct would, in a great measure, anticipate our future blessedness, and make us taste of the joys of Heaven here on earth; which is the last article I proposed as a motive to the practice of the duty before us, viz. the natural tendency it will have to promote our future happiness, to fit and prepare us for a better world. Doubtless that which chiefly will determine the state and condition of our souls, either to eternal life or misery, upon their leaving this world, is and will be the fixed, settled, and prevailing temper they are then in: according as their nature is, either through the prevalency of grace, conformable to the pure and holy nature of God, or thro' the power of sin, transformed into the likeness or resemblance of Satan, so will their state be; and these virtuous and vicious habitudes, contracted in this, and perfected in the other world, will prove to be not the instruments only, but considerable parts also of our future happiness or misery; and, if so, then a very comfortable discovery it must needs be, if, upon searching and examining into the state and condition of our souls, we shall find in ourselves this divine
grace

grate and virtue of benevolence prevalently disposing us to wish and pray for, to desire and promote, as much as in us lies, the good and welfare of all the world, and to despise all narrow and selfish regards for our own good, when it comes in competition with that of the public, or with the more considerable good of any of our brethren.

This universal love and benevolence is the nearest resemblance of our heavenly Father, that our weakness can attain to in this world, and the more we are like him in this, and all his other imitable perfections, the surer ground we have to build our hopes that we are in a due disposition for eternal fellowship and communion with him in his heavenly kingdom, to mix with, and be incorporated into that happy society of pure and holy spirits in the blessed regions above, whose chief felicity, next to the enjoyment and love of God, consists (no doubt) in that ardent and unextinguishable love and affection wherewith they embrace one another, and partake in each other's happiness, where there is no separate interests to interrupt or disturb "the rest that there remains for the "children of God;" nothing but peace, love, and joy, and that for evermore.

As "charity never faileth," as there is no end to beneficence, as being the excellency of

110 S E R M O N LXXVI.

God, and chief character of his Son; the characteristick of our religion, and our happiness both here and to all eternity, so I could equally dwell upon it.

But, to conclude, mere acts of devotion, known only between God and a good man's soul, are not sufficient testimonies, though natural and necessary effects of true and real goodness.—The monastic in his cell, and the hermit in the cave, or on the mountain, have been and are still esteemed by some the best good men.

It is not here meant to reflect on such who, from a real, though misguided zeal, or from an extravagant greatness of mind, have thus “fornaken all to follow Christ.” But (supported by the authority of an Apostle) we may venture to affirm, that “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,” as well as to “keep ourselves unpolluted from the world.”

The evidence which God requires of our love to him is our love to one another. But

The recluse and the devotee, while they say they do not love the world, in effect seem to hate mankind. They share not in the ordinary duties of social life, are useful members of no living community, or, however dead to all
the

the offices needful for preserving the body politic, and advancing the common good;—if they share not in other men's joys, neither are they partakers of other men's sorrows, at a safe distance from the sins and miseries of their fellow creatures, they contribute not to reform the one, nor remove the other; their own, and not the common happiness and salvation, seems to be the aim and end of all their conduct. But,

Goodness is not a solitary virtue, it loses its nature, and ought to lose its name, when confined to mean and sordid self love, which is an instinct, and not a virtue.

True goodness is conversant in the public, and takes in all the relations and offices of life, and makes the man who is possessed of it a common father and friend to all mankind, in “doing good to all men.”

Hath Heaven therefore blessed thee with riches, consider thyself as the appointed dispenser of them to thy brethren, “for so gatherest thou to thyself a good reward against the day of adversity.”

Let not the gifts of providence and the light of science rest ultimately, and shine inward, only on thyself; let them relieve and irradiate thy neighbour's footsteps with their kindly fostering and friendly beam and assistance; let

them, assist and light him on his dark and dangerous way through the wilderness of human life, and think not that thou who regardest another, that thou thyself shalt be forgotten : nay, " he that watereth shall also be watered " again : " the ray of knowledge, which thus informs his mind, shall (by strong reflection) more powerfully illuminate thine own. The streams of disinterested benevolence poured forth on all around thee shall swell, at length, the tide of private happiness ; and the bread which thou hast cast on many waters, shall, at the appointed time, with vast increase, return to thee again.

Repine not that thy humbler station circumscribes thy powers of being useful within a narrower sphere. " No man liveth to himself ; " the labours of the lowest of the sons of men are necessary to the well being of the whole. Consecrate them, therefore, by an upright intention to the general good, and they shall be remembered to thy praise.

True merit shall not hereafter be disregarded, though now it may lie concealed in the obscure walks of private life.

The impartial hour of future retribution shall call forth the friend of man, whatever may have been his station here below, to substantial happiness, and place an unfading crown of glory on his brow.

Above

Above all things then be actively benevolent; glory not in the ferocity of thy nature, nor steel it against the soft sensations of pity and compassion. Better for thyself, as well as others, that thy heart should overflow with the milk of human kindness. Better that thou should melt at every tale of woe, than possess that unfeeling temper which forbids thee to rejoice when thou hearest the voice of gladness, or withholds thy tears, amidst the distresses of a creature of like passions with thyself.

The necessities of our brethren are so numerous, and the advantages which the meanest of us enjoy, may be rendered so effectually subservient to the removal of their sorrows, that every one who possesses the will, may find the power to practice this noblest of virtues, this most essential duty of mankind.

“Pour into our hearts therefore, O God,
“that most excellent gift of charity, the very
“bond of peace, and of all virtues, without
“which, whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee: Grant this for thy dear Son’s sake,
“Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

SERMON LXXVII.

Of the Sin of Withholding.

PROV. xi. 26. "*He that withholdeth, the People
"shall curse him."*

THE effects of the fall of our first parent, is in nothing more clearly seen than in that perversion of our nature from the rectitude of its first original.

"God at first created man upright, but he hath found out to himself many inventions" of evil. Instead of that mutual sympathy and rejoicing in acts of brotherly beneficence, how narrow, how selfish, and contracted, do we find the mind of the first-born man upon earth, and, through him, all the descendants of Adam.

Upon which account (and as a peculiar excellency of holy writ) we find the Scriptures every where replete with admonitions to counteract this work of the Devil, and to reinstate man, as near as possible, in the first rectitude of his nature,

nature, which was not wholly for himself, but for the relief and comfort of those that should descend from him, or should be partakers with him, of the common nature of mankind; for,

Though, through the different capacities, and diligence, and successes of different persons, the food and necessaries of life should be differently distributed into the hands of men, yet the more fortunate are not therefore to think the indigent beneath their attention, nor, when calling upon them for the necessaries of life, to withhold from them the supports of nature.

Yea, should there be any so without feeling as to stop their ears to the complaints of the needy, what can they expect, but that, "in the bitterness of their soul, they should curse them," according to the severity of their behaviour towards them?

Man, in his uncorrupt nature, is sociable and free: humanity, therefore, and beneficence, is ever expected from him; and whoever obstructs the course of nature, what can he expect, but that, like the impeding of a mighty torrent, with its overflowing waves, it should severely lash all opponents?

The calls of nature, and demands of indigence, are so irresistible, that the heaviest complaints are truly justifiable before them; yea, and even God, the God of Nature himself,

more

116 S E R M O N LXXVII.

more effectually to open the hearts of his creatures in dispensing goodness to their brethren, hath expressly declared, that he will be the avenger of all oppressors. "By no means
 "grieve a poor man, for if he cry unto me in
 "the bitterness of his soul, I, the Lord, will
 "hear him."

Yea, and even the blessed Jesus (that pattern of goodness and beneficence) expressly assures us, that "with whatever measure we
 "mete unto others, it shall be measured to us
 "again."

Both God and man will regard our behaviour, and will render to us an answerable return, whether of kindness unto blessing, or of ill will to cursing,—so that God, and the Son of God, and mankind in general, conspire together in this wise maxim of our Saviour, that
 "whatsoever we would that men should do
 "unto us, even so we are to do unto them;
 "for this is the law, and the prophets," yea,
 "this is the whole of man."

No marvel, then, that Solomon hath so expressly asserted, that "he that withholdeth, the
 "people shall curse him." Thus much being premised, I shall proceed to lay before you such arguments and considerations as can be produced, in order to discourage so iniquitous a practice.

When

When

When it hath pleased the Lord to prosper us in all good things; and "our barns and "storehouses are filled with plenty," yet "what "do all these things profit us," so long as we see their possessors to be greedy retainers of them?

With such men, to the needy, these things are as though they were not, and we are in no way benefited by them, save the regret of "be- "holding them with our eyes," without being permitted to partake of their beneficial effects.

"Better, far better would it have been for "the needy, not to have known these things, "than after having known them, to be denied "the comforts due;" but for the possessors, a too great malediction cannot be expressed: "He that withholdeth, the people shall curse "him."

"So long as thou doest well, men will speak "well of thee;" yea, "so long as we do well, "we shall have praise of the same;" but, "if "thou doest evil, who will intreat for thee be- "fore the Lord?" Not even in the most light and trivial affairs will they willingly lend a helping hand, much less will they say "the "Lord prosper you, we wish you good luck in "the name of the Lord." But even in the most weighty affairs, even their eternal con-
cern,

cern, "who will intreat for them before the
"Lord?" But further,

This practice not only procures to itself the
ill will and curses of all men, but it is even a
curse to itself.

"There is (saith the wise man) that which
"withholdeth more than is meet, but (what
"follows?) it tendeth to poverty"

The good things of this life being withheld,
tend not only to the oppression of the indigent
and needy, but even "to the hurt of the owner
"thereof."

The many ways by which substance (hoarded
up) is diminished, is too complicated here to
admit of a discussion; and it were well if grie-
vances of this lesser sort only, were the sole
evils sustained by the withholders amongst us.

Losses of a more considerable weight, and
which more nearly concern our everlasting
state, come under this department also. I mean
the almost fatal necessity which men lie under
hereby, to purloin from the revenues of the rich.

It is commonly said that "necessity hath no
"law;" and when men find the hearts of their
superiors so obdurate and callous, that neither
an equitable price, nor the most urgent intrea-
ties, can prevail, what can they do? Is not this
a fit opportunity for the great seducer of man-
kind

kind to interpose, and insinuate the last expedient of self-preservation?

I do not speak this with the least design to justify any illicit practice, but only to shew the almost unavoidable necessity men lie under hereto, when they are debarred every other method of common and natural support.

The Apostle's injunction is, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

But these men are the occasions of evil unto the needy, and will it not make the ears of the most obdurate tingle, when, in the day of judgment, they shall rise up and say, "Behold these are the ungodly that prospered; these are they that had riches in abundance." Lo, "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not. Depart with me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels."

But further, there is not only iniquity in this practice, but unreasonableness and inhumanity also. It is an express command, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, nor the ass that bringeth in thy provender."

These things we are particularly heedful of, and glory much in the prosperity of our cattle; and shall we then deny, and even withhold
from

from our fellow creatures the things which are due unto them? and the which are sent unto us not wholly for ourselves, but for the general good, for the relief of all around us, especially of those "who rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness for us."

May I not address you in the words of holy writ, only with a little variation?

"Do we thus take care of oxen, and shall we not much rather take care of beings like ourselves, O ye of little compassion?"

Our food, our cloathing, our convenience of habitation, our protection from the injuries, and enjoyment of the comforts and pleasures of life, all these we owe to the assistance of others, and could not enjoy without their help: It is our duty therefore to be a friend to mankind, as it is our interest that man should be friendly to us.

As, therefore, the branches of a tree return their sap to the root from whence it arose; as a river poureth its streams to the sea, whence its spring was supplied; so the heart of a grateful man delighteth in returning a benefit received.

"Grind not the face of the poor then, and make not the needy tarry long, lest it be sin unto thee; yea, let it not grieve thee to bow
"down

“down thine ear unto him, and give him a
 “friendly answer with meekness, and put him
 “not off, when thou hast it by thee:” “For,
 “if he curse thee in the bitterness of his soul,
 “his prayer shall be heard, of him that made
 “him.”

But further, the good things of this world
 are intrusted to the rich only as stewards, and
 they are not their own. Now,

“Of stewards it is required that they be
 “found faithful; and as we have freely re-
 “ceived, so let us therefore freely give,” and
 not grudge to communicate to the necessities
 of the needy, lest (as in the case of the unjust
 steward) our Lord should say, “How is it
 “that I hear this of thee: Give an account
 “of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no
 “longer steward;” and then whose shall all
 those things be which we have so carefully
 hoarded together?

The not using aright, much more the de-
 taining the good things of providence, justly
 forfeits any future favour towards us; and God
 hath, in every deed, been known many times
 to take the forfeiture.

God, who hath all nature at his command;
 hath a thousand ways to make us refund wealth
 unjustly detained, or at least to recall us from
 it; yea, the unjust detaining the good things

which God hath blessed us with may be a sufficient justification for him to "withdraw from us these his blessings, and to give them to others who shall render him their fruits in due season." And then, in the upbraiding agony of our conscience, we shall say, "How am I greatly fallen; stricken of God, smitten, and afflicted?" and shall gladly "crouch even for a piece of bread," to those whom we now so greatly oppress, and "shall begin with shame to take the lowest place," and say to them, in the bitter compunction of our heart, "I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am not in the least worthy of thy remembrance; make me, I pray thee, as one of thy hired servants;" yea, and how will it dispose him towards us? so that he that withholdeth is neither wise for the present, nor provident for the future. In a word,

In this sin of withholding is comprehended sins of various hue—ingratitude to God; inhumanity to our fellow creatures; and folly and injustice to ourselves; these are its never-failing attendants.

But what are the precedents, and where are the instances from whence we could learn this self-contractedness?

"God opens his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness."

Jesus

Jesus Christ, our great pattern and example,
 "went about continually doing good," and fed
 multitudes and thousands, though even at the
 expence of miracles to do it; whereas these mi-
 racles of nature reverse, starve nations and
 kingdoms, though even at the expence of their
 own happiness.

With what severity doth our blessed Saviour
 upbraid the rich man, whose ground brought
 forth plentifully, and who thereon built pro-
 jects only for reserving his substance, by pul-
 ling down his barns, and building greater,
 wherein he might bestow all his goods! "Thou
 fool, this night thy soul shall be required of
 thee, and then whose shall all those things
 be which thou hast heaped together?"—"So
 is, and will be, every man in the like dan-
 ger, who layeth up treasure for himself, and
 is not rich towards God in all good works."

The primitive Christians, and first planters
 of Christianity, rejoiced in the common wel-
 fare, and distributed according to the necessi-
 ties of all men; "they had all things in com-
 mon."

But these are the dregs of time, "wherein
 every man liveth for himself alone, and not
 for another."

If we would distinguish ourselves agreeable
 to the genius and peculiar characteristic of our

holy religion, we must be men of a quite different sort, and be "tender-hearted, and put on bowels of compassion, and be compassionate on all men;" for this is the mark whereby all men shall know that ye are my disciples (saith our Lord), if ye have love one to another." In a word,

"The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all;" and they have all a right (according to their different stations) to be partakers of God's bounty to the whole. "He therefore that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his maker;" (i. e.) he that withholdeth from him the necessaries of life, does all that in him lies to insinuate, that God takes no care of the needy.

No marvel then that whoever thus thwarts the laws of both God and nature, that they should both set him at defiance, and most effectually humble him.

Undoubtedly some sins are of a deeper dye, and much more loaded with guilt than others; not but all sins are offensive to "God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." But,

In the list of sinners, they must be conceived to stand foremost, as principal, who are of a relentless and oppressive spirit,—who bear hard, with merciless hands, with rigour and severity, upon those who are under them, and whom providence

providence hath placed in a state of dependence; who withhold from them what the Roman poet very emphatically calls "*viscera sua*," for so dear are the necessaries of life to them,

Against whom are the bitterest imprecations that can be denounced by the mouth of man levelled, such imprecations as that the ears of every "one who heareth them must tingle?"—

Against whom hath God declared by the mouth of his Prophet, that he himself will be "a swift witness?"—Against what delinquent is it that our Saviour takes up the parable, and consigns to eternal destruction?—"Let him that readeth understand."—Is it not he, whom the Psalmist very emphatically calls "the Tyrant?" "who took no delight in doing good, but persecuted the poor and helpless man, and sought how he might slay him, that was already vexed at the heart!"

Of all the evil works that are done under the sun, none is more detestable, more odious to God, or injurious to our fellow creatures—"they are the cries of the oppressed, which surely enter into the ears of the Lord."

Hear the answer from the mouth of God:—"Now, for the comfortless troublesake of the needy, and because of the deep sighing of the poor, I will up (saith the Lord) and will

“ help every one from him that swelleth against
“ him, and will set him at rest.”

I cannot conclude this better than with that
excellent maxim of our Saviour :

“ Whatsoever ye would that men should do
“ unto you, even so do unto them, for this is
“ the law and the prophets.”

S E R M O N LXXVIII.

The great Duty of Distributing, in Opposition to Withholding.

PROV. xi. 26. *“But Blessing shall be upon the
“Head of him that selleth.”*

THE deserved ill - will and malediction which the withholder brings upon him, is sufficient (one would think) to induce us all to distribute “according to the ability which God hath given us,” and not to be unjust retainers of the blessings which God hath committed to us, upon trust, for the benefit of mankind in general.

But, lest there should be any of so sordid and disingenuous a principle as not to be influenced by these things, nor be sensible of the baseness and deformity of it, the wise man immediately adds, “But blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth.”

The

The favours of God, and the showers of his benediction, the good-will and assistance of mankind, is what we may reasonably expect from the due discharge of the duties of our station. "Blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth."

But as these words have a more immediate respect to the good will of God towards us on this account, and by that means the influence of his favour on us, I shall therefore more immediately apply myself to them under this view.

And here the reasons of that distinguishing mark of God's favour, which (in the words of my text, and other places) is set upon this duty, I take to be reducible to the following heads.

First, Because we hereby imitate God in one of the glorious and moral perfections of his nature.

Secondly, We do honour to his providence.

Thirdly, We discover hereby what power religion hath over us, and what we are really at the bottom.

Lastly, Act suitably to one of the prime and essential perfections of human nature.

Among all the Attributes of God, there is none which he seems so highly to exalt as that of his mercy and goodness: His providential care is over all his works, and "he opens his
hand,

“hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.”

It is pious therefore to believe, that those who endeavour to copy thereafter, are on that account acceptable and well-pleasing to him, and that he will render to them blessings accordingly.

As God condescends to take upon him the character of a Father, and the proper human passions arising from that relation, the more we endeavour to be like him (if we may argue from the effects of one of the strongest passions of men), the more he will like us, and be pleased to see his image renewed in us; and what other can his favour towards us be, but favours unto us, and that blessings shall be upon us? But,

Secondly, We hereby do honour to his providence.

The present state and condition of things in the world require that men should be under different and unequal circumstances. Many wise ends of providence are served in this world, by the distinction of “high and low, rich and poor.”

Were mankind upon a level with respect to their fortune, or outward condition of life, they would be in danger of becoming so, more generally than they are, with respect to the inward

ward capacity and improvement of their minds; a stop would be put to a great many arts and inventions, and other effects of study and industry, which do so much contribute to the support and conveniency, the happiness and comfort of human life.

But though for these, and many other wise reasons, God hath so ordered it, that "the rich and the poor shall meet together" in this world, and that while some persons live in all the ease, plenty, and splendor of a great fortune, others shall find it very difficult to acquire the necessary supports of life; yet persons of a superior condition are not to think themselves born wholly for themselves, and therefore to sequester their affluence from others, but (after having provided decently for their own wants, and for those more immediately dependent upon them) to distribute according to the necessities of all men.

For probably this, among other reasons, may be one, why God hath put so great a number of men under circumstances of want and distress, that the glory of imparting, and benefit of receiving, might be mutually felt among men; that those who are in a better capacity may have constant and proper occasions of exerting themselves in all the good offices of humanity, love and charity, which are the
brightest

brightest ornaments of the human nature, and that "others (beholding these their good works) " may be more effectually excited to glorify " God;" and, "go and do likewise."

But, though God can interpose by an immediate and miraculous power, to supply the wants of the needy, even when all human means fail, yet it is not so agreeable to the settled order and methods of his providence to do it; and therefore, in such cases, he hath deputed the rich and affluent as his stewards, to deal out what he hath entrusted them with, according to the various just demands, and natural exigencies of mankind, rendering unto them good measure, and shakēn together, without fraud or diminution.

It is incumbent on the rich (as ever they hope to give a good account of their stewardship) to do honour to their Lord and Master, by carefully considering, and conscientiously pursuing these ends of trust committed unto them; and therefore it is (as I conceive) in this sense that we are to understand these words of Solomon, viz, "He that honoureth God, hath " mercy on the poor;" i. e. he who contributes, according to his abilities, to the relief and support of those whom the providence of God may be thought to have left more naked and exposed, does a real honour to his providence,

dence, by making up, as much as in him lies, the seeming inequalities of it, which necessarily arise from the present state and condition of things in this world.

On the other hand (as it is observed in the former part of the verse) "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker;" i. e. he who by violence or the arts of unjust and indirect gain, takes advantages of the necessities of other people, or by a too much forecast of self-economy withholds from them the necessaries of life, thereby rendering their condition still more necessitous and disconsolate,—such a man doth all he can to bring dishonour on the providence of God, as if he had abandoned all care of his creatures, and had made no proper or competent provision for them.

Thirdly, We hereby discover the power which religion hath over us, and what we are really at the bottom.

The laws of our religion are so admirably suited to the passions and inclinations of our human nature, that it is hard, in many cases, to discover whether the duty we perform be done with a sincere intention to please God, or to gratify some motion of self-love; and, considering how apt our hearts are to deceive us, there is some difficulty in distinguishing properly this point. But,

The

S E R M O N LXXVIII. 133

The best way to come to a certain knowledge whether we do any thing out of pure love to God or not, is to practice such duties as have something in them contrary to the motions and maxims of self-love.

This is the most sensible argument that we can give to ourselves, or others, that our heart is right with God, and that religion hath, in truth, some power over us.

Of this nature are the duties before us, of freely imparting to the necessities of others, wherein we willingly deny ourselves some present or future advantage, and so depart, in some measure, from our own interests, in regard to the necessities, and, in some cases, to the conveniencies of other people.

Now such sacrifices, no doubt, wherein we give up our own interest and inclinations, as they proceed from a true love to God, and feeling to our fellow creatures, are acceptable and well-pleasing to him, and he will accordingly bless us. But,

Lastly, We hereby act agreeably to one of the prime and essential inclinations of human nature.

God hath implanted on our very frame and make a compassionate sense and feeling for the wants and necessities of others, which disposes us to contribute all we can to their relief; so

that when we see any of our fellow-creatures in circumstances of distress, we are naturally (I had almost said mechanically) inclined to be helpful unto them.

The Apostle significantly expresses our pursuing this natural inclination, by "putting on bowels of mercy;" and as all the actions of nature are pleasant, so there is none which gives a good man a greater, more solid, and lasting pleasure, than this of distributing to the necessities of his brethren, when in his power; which is an argument that the principle from whence this action proceeds is very deeply rooted in our nature, and that a due sense of those calamities which we see others labour under, will not, nay, cannot content itself with a bare fruitless and formal compassion, by saying unto them, "be ye warmed and filled," without imparting the necessary requisites in order thereto.

No, where men follow nature in those tender motions of it, which inclines them to acts of common benevolence, they will not be easy unless they lay hold of the proper occasions of exerting them, and equitably distribute (as far as they are able) according to the due right and just demands of all men.

I have considered the duty before us as almost an act of charity; and even in this light
we

S E R M O N LXXVIII. 135

see what powerful reasons we all lie under to be heedful herein. But,

When we consider it as an act of justice, as a deed only transferred for an equitable price, of how much greater obligation do we all lie under hereto; for (saith the wise man) "blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth."

These are some of the many reasons whereby we are induced not to withhold the blessings, whether of plenty or provision, which providence shall at any time vouchsafe us, but to consider ourselves as stewards only, and not the immediate proprietors of them before the Lord; and, that having first moderately provided for ourselves, and those more immediately depending upon us, we "deal out to the needy, according as God hath blessed us, according as he hath dealt to every man" the proportion of his goodness: And,

To encourage us hereto, he hath given us many and great inducements, styling us hereby "the blessed of the Lord;" assuring us that "a blessing shall be given unto us;" that he will for these things "open the windows of Heaven from above, and pour down blessings upon you in abundance;" yea, and even in the natural thing itself, how prone is it to its own reward?

“The liberal soul (saith the wise man)
“shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall
“be watered also himself.”

This we daily experience; we are all of us forward enough to assist the helpful, and to render him kindness for his favours towards us—ingratitude being always held in the most vile detestation: So that where the selfish and reserved stand alone, expecting assistance, but have not; the liberal man is poured in upon by his friends, and “no good thing in return
“is withheld from him.”

Upon the whole, then, “there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that
“withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth
“to poverty.”

Both God and man will conjoin in this equitable treatment, and “will render to every
“man according to his deeds, and to the measure he hath already given.” They will set the retainer at defiance, and will most effectually humble him; they will evil requite the selfish and reserved, “but blessing shall be up-
“on the head of him that selleth.”

S E R M O N. LXXIX.

Of Prodigality.

AMOS vi. 1. *“Woe to them that are at Ease in
“Sion.”*

By the word ease we are not here to understand any natural freedom from pain or grief, or anguish of body, this being a state at all times to be desired, and which we are equally commanded to consult—but of disposition only, (agreeable to the context) “who put far from
“them the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near: who indulge themselves
“in every sensual delight; who chaunt to the
“sound of the viol, and invent to themselves
“instruments of music, and drink wine in
“bowls, and anoint themselves with chief
“ointments, but regard not the works of the
“Lord, neither consider the operations of his
“hands: who enjoy the good things that are
“present, and speedily use the creatures like

“ as in their youth ; who fill themselves with
 “ costly wine and ointments, and let no flower
 “ of the spring pass by them untouched, but
 “ crown themselves with rose buds before they
 “ be wither’d ; who none of them go without
 “ their part of voluptuousness, but leave tokens
 “ of their joyfulness in every place, accounting
 “ this their portion and lot for ever.”

The evil of Prodigality, the sin and ingratitude of it against God, and the inhumanity of it towards our fellow creatures, are considerations effectually to dissuade us therefrom : it is destructive of every right principle, it is destructive to the public good, it is impiety to God, and prejudicial also to our own interests, both here and hereafter.

Were we seriously to consider the use and excellency of our natures, and the many bountiful gifts which providence hath bestowed on us, we should certainly avoid those dangerous and pernicious vices, in which we are so frequently and willingly engaged.

If we take a view of the various and rich productions of nature, and the different uses to which they are appropriated, we cannot but admire the generous source from whence they flow. Man was created a rational being, and constituted Lord over all the earth, and every thing was formed for his use. An excess there-
fore

fore in any of them must render him ungrateful and displeasing both to God and his fellow creatures.

That God, by his prophets, hath pronounced a woe to such irregularities and excesses, yea, that they are even a woe to themselves, should, one would think, be a sufficient bar to them, and to all inducements leading thereto.

“Woe to them that are at ease in Sion.”

The consideration of the dignity and excellency of our nature plainly informs us how mean and unworthy it is to dissolve in luxury, softness, and effeminacy, and how becoming, on the other hand, it is to lead a life of frugality, temperance, and sobriety.

The wise and gracious ruler of the world hath created us to obey him, and from that obedience to receive our proper share of happiness. He hath adapted a variety of satisfactions to the various parts of our frame, and taught us by nature, but more distinctly by his word, the due subordination of each, and the circumstances in which we may, or may not, lawfully partake of them.

To speak against all enjoyment of the good things of this life therefore, in general, may be thought too severe, and is what the present age will not perhaps well relish, or be altogether just or reasonable; because, as man consists of
a body

a body as well as a soul, there is a duty no doubt owing to the former as well as to the latter, especially as they are so nearly connected together, as, according to their different states, to have different effects on each other.

What, therefore, we would dissuade from, is only the irregularities of our corrupt nature in this point, and excess in them, from a consideration of the great and manifold inconveniences which attend such indulgences: And here, who knows not that health, that fortune, that personal elegance, the peace and order of families, and all the comfort and honour of after ages, are the sacrifices which men make, who are led by too delicate appetites and profligacy to a riotous course of life? But further,

Not only to the profligate himself, and his immediate descendants, is this vice of pernicious consequence, but even to his needy brother also, for whose relief, in part, the many good things of this life were committed to him, and are therefore not to be prodigally squandered away upon ourselves alone, but, after our own comfortable subsistence and decent accommodation, and of those more immediately dependent upon us, are to be laid out for the relief and support of the needy and necessitous, as good stewards of the “ manifold
“ mercies

“mercies of God,” in feeding the hungry, and cloathing the naked, in visiting the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and supporting him that hath no friend.

Who knows not the fatal effects of prodigality to the health, which it gradually impairs and wastes away amidst many and tormenting diseases, and at length totally destroys?—not to add the mischief that is hereby occasioned of abusing the ends for which those things were given us to contrary purposes.

Again, How fearful are the effects of it often, yea ever, to the circumstances, and too often leading men to illicit practices, in order to support their irregularities; thereby deservedly, through justice, bringing a shameful life to a more ignominious and shameful death.

No sensual pleasures are of lasting continuance, and their effects are of the most pernicious consequences. Pain and anxiety, guilt, grief, late and deep repentance (if any), and oftentimes death and ruin, are its almost never-failing attendants.

Not to mention the defect of provision for families, which is hereby omitted through extravagant expences. Besides,

What a shame is it, and ingratitude, to dishonour God with his own gifts? and because he hath freely given, therefore to riot as freely
in

in all his blessings, and thus to requite the Lord for all his mercies?

This is not the behaviour of a rational creature, of a penitent for sin, or candidate for eternal felicity. There can arise from it no "meetness for the inheritance of the Saints in light," nor susceptibility of spiritual happiness, nor hope of escaping future damnation.

Moderate and needful refreshments, decent and becoming decorations, are indeed allowed us, and are what we may lawfully pursue; but can we think of offering up a series of nothing but extravagant dissipations and profligacy, or worse? Our baptismal vow promised other things for us.

The Holy Scriptures have prescribed a very different conduct; have told us that "we cannot serve two masters;" that "they who live in riot and excess, in profusion and profligacy, are dead whilst they live." That "he who delighted himself splendidly, and fared sumptuously every day," at last took this for his portion, "to lift up his eyes in torments."

Profligacy and dissipation in this life are indeed, in the nature of things, irreconcilable with a proper regard for the next, for our fondness and attention can no more admit of two supreme objects than our adoration.

"Take

“ Take heed, therefore, that your hearts be
 “ not overcharged with surfeiting and drunk-
 “ enness, and the follies of this life, and so
 “ that day, the great day of accounts, come
 “ upon you unawares.”

It appears then that an inordinate profligacy,
 and revelling in the good things of this life, is
 irreconcilable with a proper affection to God,
 or our duty towards him ; let us therefore pos-
 sess our souls with a just sense of their vanity,
 and so frequently transfer our thoughts from
 such fading objects, and in our contemplation
 “ lay hold on the enduring substance that is
 “ set before us.

But the worst consideration of all is the ef-
 fect it will produce hereafter.

“ Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl
 “ for the miseries that shall come upon you ;
 “ ye that have lived in pleasure upon the earth,
 “ and have been wanton, and have nourished
 “ your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.”

“ Behold the wrath of the Lord will come
 “ forth, and he will deal with you according
 “ to his excellent greatness, and according to
 “ your heightened imaginations before him :”
 “ when it will be in vain to call to the moun-
 “ tains to fall on us, or to the hills to cover
 “ us,” but we shall be summoned before the
 awful tribunal of God, and with exceeding
 trembling

trembling shall be obliged to hear that terrible sentence: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into
 "everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and
 "his Angels:" "for though I gave you bread
 "to the full, yet ye only ministered it, as
 "an occasion to the flesh, to fulfil the lusts
 "thereof." "I was hungry, and ye gave me
 "no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;
 "naked, and ye cloathed me not; sick, and
 "in prison, and ye visited me not, neither mi-
 "nistered unto me: but thou pamperest thy-
 "self to the full—verily thou hast already had
 "thy reward, take that thine is, and go thy
 "way."

"Such will finally be the doom of every one
 "that in his heart departeth from the living
 "God," to revel in the sinful enjoyments of
 this life.

To be rich then in this world, and at the
 same time poor in grace, is, in truth, the
 greatest abuse of, and worst return we can make
 for the favours of God; since all that exceeds
 our own just and necessary occasions was given
 us, in trust, for the sake of others, to enable
 us, by providing for the relief of their wants,
 to lay up for ourselves a reversion of happiness
 hereafter, when this world forsakes us.

If wicked and extravagant indulgences there-
 fore are not foregone in this life, and repented
 of,

of, they will hereafter greatly aggravate our future misery ; yea, this will make our sufferings much more sharp and sensible, for as nothing commends pleasure more, or gives happiness a quicker taste and relish than precedent sufferings and pain—so, on the other hand, nothing exasperates suffering more, or sets a keener edge upon misery, than to step into afflictions and pains immediately out of a state of ease and softness.

This, we find in the parable, was the great aggravation of the rich man's torment ; he had first received his good things, and was afterwards tormented.

We should do well therefore to consider that these pleasures of sin and prodigality, whatever they be, which have so much temptation in them, will hereafter be one of the greatest aggravations of our torment.

There must be something then truly enticing in these things, if (after a due consideration of all the evils consequent thereon) we still persist to do wickedly in the same.

The ingenuity of our minds, and the reason of things, have in general great influence on our moral conduct. Now here (as we have seen) the vice before us is of itself destructive of its end, as consuming the means of its support, and frequently leaves us destitute, even

of the common conveniencies and necessities of life; for his support must be truly large indeed, that can supply all the craving desires of an heightened inordinate fancy; besides, we hereby deprive ourselves of all opportunities of doing good, and of being rich in good works; for, he who squanders away his treasure in extravagance, as in the end he hath generally nothing for himself, so must consequently be more destitute of relief for the needy; yea, he that squandereth away his treasure, refuseth the means to do good.

Add to this, the misery and anguish arising in his own mind from the frequent disappointments which must hereby be occasioned to him; for, the end of much expence is much grief. After all the boasted enjoyments of sense, it cannot give that pleasure and satisfaction which it pretends to.—It is not in the power of worldly extravagance to give ease.

Solomon, who enjoyed the most of these things, and kept not his heart from any of them, yet pronounceth upon them all (even in their best estate) that they are but “vanity;” yea, and what is worse, “vexation of spirit.”

Add to this, the many temptations to sins of various kinds, to which they are hereby constantly exposed—and, above all, consequently, as the end of all, final death, and eternal destruction, which will be aggravated, as we have seen,

seen, beyond measure, on account of our former effeminacy and real softness.

Considering then the many evils produced hereby, even to an aggravation of misery, together with the manifold wants and necessities of our needy brethren around us, to be supplied out of our abundance, it is our highest wisdom to be rather upon the reserve, than to approach too near the confines of licentiousness, lest hereby we be plunged into those follies which are the natural effects and disorders of it, to our real misery and disgrace; and are moreover debarred from being able to give relief to those who are in want, and may, in right and justice, demand it of us, as they have need; especially as the things of the world are not our own, but are only entrusted to us, as with stewards, to be laid out by us as we all have need; and therefore not to be prodigally lavished away in excess, but to be reserved prudently, for the purposes of piety, and for the needy occasions of all men.

“The putting on of gold, and wearing of apparel—the providing for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,” will not profit us before the Lord. “It is only the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price,” and the “mortifying our flesh, in order to subdue the lusts thereof,” is the only victory before him.

“The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, “or the pride of life,” are neither of them the end of man before God.

Curious studies and inventions to please the palate by high seasoned artificial luxuries, or to form the shape and attract the eye, may indeed serve well enough to uphold the pliant engineer, but when we consider that to pamper the body is not the end of our profession, and that besides this there are urgent calls from the truly needy and necessitous, whom 'tis no less our interest than duty, under providence, to supply, we shall rather think it becomes us more to study how to “make to ourselves friends of the “mammon of unrighteousness,” through the channel of benevolence, than thus in unnecessary profusion to do no good; that when these our earthly tabernacles fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations.

To conclude. The life of a Christian is a life of an exceeding even course, equally guarding against all defaults, and every extreme whatever; in no way coveting an abundance, which is but too often “retained, to the hurt “of the owners thereof,” nor prodigally squandering away that portion of good things which God hath entrusted him with, but walks in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord (to the utmost of his power) blameless.

S E R M O N LXXX.

Prudence, in Opposition to Prodigality.

I. COR. vii. 31. *“Use this World, as not abusing it.”*

THE due regulation of human life (as to the pleasures and enjoyments of it) being a duty both of universal extent, and of infinite importance, and wherein all mankind are concerned during their pilgrimage here below, and on which the everlasting happiness or misery of their future state chiefly depends, it can never be an improper subject for our meditation.

I shall therefore, in endeavouring to illustrate and enforce the admonition of the Apostle before us,

First shew when, and in what instances, we may be said to “use the world, as not abusing it,” and wherein the contrary extreme lies; and then,

Secondly, Offer such considerations as may induce us to use it aright.

First, A right use of this world excludes all the inordinate pleasures and enjoyments thereof, such as either in their own nature, or by virtue of the divine prohibition, are sinful and unlawful.

The principle of seeking our own continuance and well-being, as well with respect to the body as the soul, flows from the very essence of our nature, and is what is impressed upon us by God himself at our creation.

And therefore to act in conformity to it, is not only innocent, but our duty so to do, and to act contrary to it (if we were capable of so doing) would include in it a violation of one of the prime and fundamental laws of our nature.

But, as the desire of our well-being is from God, so the means by which that end is to be acquired are prescribed by him, and nothing that he has forbidden must be made use of to accomplish it; i. e. our innocency must be the standard of all our pleasures, and we must not purchase our satisfaction by the breach of any of God's commandments, but must let the sense of our duty to him over-rule all our inferior desires, and so regulate the tendencies of our animal nature, that it may never
fix

fix upon any sinful object; and so long as we do this, we cannot greatly err in the point before us. But,

Secondly, As for those worldly pleasures and delights which are in themselves lawful, our enjoyment of them must be conformable to the bounds and measures which God himself hath set us, and in the degrees that he allows. Now,

These are, that we use them not in the full extent of their scope, and in the utmost height of their magnitude, but only with due moderation, “as using, and not abusing them;” not fixing our minds too much upon them, so as thereby to obstruct and stifle the higher and nobler operations of the soul.

When this medium is duly observed, and we are moderate and cool in the enjoyments of the world, we may then satisfy ourselves that we “use it (in the Apostle’s sense) and not abuse it.”

They therefore do greatly err, who, for the sake of any profit or pleasure, do willingly transgress the commandments of God, and become openly and habitually wicked and vicious, and live addicted to sensuality and intemperance in sin.

“Love not the world (saith St. John), nor
 “the things that are in the world:” “If any
 “man love the world, the love of the Father
 “is not in him; for all that is in the world,
 “thou

“ the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and
“ the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is
“ of the world.”

They therefore who are addicted to sensuality and intemperance, unruly appetites, and irregular pleasures, who live in vain magnificence and superfluous wealth for themselves alone, under imperious oppressiveness,, without any virtuous deeds to balance the account, “ use the world, in the highest sense, as abusing it,” and thereby justly fall under condemnation; when we omit no opportunities of enjoying the good things of this life, and our great end and serious employment is only to amuse, divert, and regale ourselves, till we contract an indifference for all manly, rational, and godlike actions.

Of all the dispositions which are not directly vicious, there is none of a more deceitful and dangerous nature than a prevalent inclination hereto, and none therefore which is to be governed with a stricter hand; if this temper be indulged, and suffered to grow into a settled habit, it produces a sad variety of evils, and fills the head with a loose train of unprofitable and unconnected fancies.

Thus the better years steal away, and worse succeed; the soul departs hence without any preparation for hereafter, and enters the world
of

of spirits naked and disconsolate; being deprived of all that was her delight, she weeps and wails for her sensual pleasures and delights, "and refuseth to be comforted, because they "are not."

We are made, no doubt, for this world, and this world for us, and the good things, the comforts and conveniences which it contains, are usually placed in our view, and within our reach, as both an incitement and recompence of our honest industry.

They are called in Scripture "Gifts of "God," which, when he sees proper, he bestows upon his servants; they may therefore, in their degree, be lawfully sought, and as lawfully possessed and used. Of this we are fully sensible, and as readily practice all that is suitable hereto, in providing for our subsistence, and seldom fail in it for want of inclination. But oftentimes we forget a much more important truth, that this world is only a passage to another; that our present state will last but for a few days, and the next for ever; that in the future, the eternal, and unchangeable state, we cannot be happy, unless we carry hence with us a mind purified from all earthly and sensual things, which "perish with the using." Forgetting these truths, and suffering the objects of our senses to take possession of our hearts,
we

we are perpetually occupied in pursuing things temporal and transitory to the neglect of things eternal. This is to have an undue affection for the things of this world, and to abuse them to contrary purposes from what they were designed; therefore,

Thirdly, and more particularly in the use and desire of the enjoyments of this life, we must take care that we consider them only subordinately, as intermedial, and tending to a further end of God's appointment, viz. the glory of God, and the salvation of our souls, agreeable to that of the Apostle, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we must do all to the glory of God;" not that it is absolutely necessary actually to intend always the glory of God in these things, or that the neglect thereof makes every such action sinful; no—but that only habitually intending the glory of God in all our actions, we use none of these things "as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," but only (according to God's appointment of them) as means in subordination to an higher end, viz. the enabling us to the right performance of our duty, to the honour and praise of God, and the benefit of ourselves, and of one another.

Thus have I shewn when and in what degrees and circumstances the use of this world
is

is prohibited, and when lawful and allowed, whence we may learn what the duty of a Christian is, and what the regulation of his conduct ought to be, with relation to the world.

Religion, which is the law of reason refined, deprives us only of those things which for our own sake we ought to avoid, though God had given us no express command concerning them.

The pleasure of society, and of friendship, and of the things which conduce to our present ease and satisfaction, to the improvement of our minds, and to the support of ourselves and society, and even riches, honours, and power, when they are not bought too dear, at the expence of our innocence, but are used as they ought, are not forbidden us.

The love and use of these things is natural; religion therefore doth not absolutely forbid them, but only limits and moderates us in them, "using them as not abusing them."

It commands us to use them rationally, and with a due subordination to objects more excellent, and of higher concern to us, and to prefer the favour of God, the cause of virtue, the good of mankind, and our own eternal welfare, before all amusements, or earthly enjoyments whatever.

He who hath such dispositions as these, and others of like import, may be truly said to come
up

up to the sense of the text, and so to "use this world, as not abusing it."

Such dispositions we must therefore endeavour to acquire; and if our endeavours are sincere, they will certainly be successful, for God hath abundantly enabled us so to do, and hath so ordered the course of things here before us, that we should never want powerful motives and incitements to it.

The doctrine of a future state should seem, even alone, to be sufficient to this purpose.

Rewards are proposed to us surpassing, beyond comparison, the most valuable things of this life, and the loss of which cannot be compensated by the highest of our sensual gratifications.

We might therefore well suppose, that whoever firmly believes this revelation of immortality, cannot (by the abuse of any temporal or transitory object) wish to deprive himself of this inestimable reward. But,

Because this recompence of well-doing is unseen and future, and, for that reason, affects us more faintly, whilst worldly objects strike immediately upon our senses, and their temptations press upon us on all sides, God (that we might not be seduced by these allurements) hath, in great wisdom and kindness, so ordered things, that there should be nothing here be-
low

low whereby reasonably to divert or seduce us from our duty.

The Apostle, in the words immediately following my text, is very expressive hereto, "for" (says he) the fashion of this world passeth away."

There are infinite unseen accidents, which, when we think ourselves most secure of the pleasures and enjoyments of this life, may deprive us of them.

Solomon (fully sensible of this) very significantly files them "things that are not," and therefore wisely cautions us not to be too fond of them, since "they all perish with their using." : Neither they nor we are permanent for ever : Besides, what pleases to day, may be our aversion to-morrow, nothing being more fickle than the fancy and palate of man.

Were we to continue in this world for ever, and had no prospect of another, we might then indeed well be allowed to indulge our sensual appetites in all the pleasures of this life ; but,

However the degenerate part of mankind may depress the glory of their order by their wickedness, we are assured that we are made for more noble and higher attainments, even for a perpetual duration hereafter, for which it will be our wisdom at all times to provide, and this we can only do, by sincerely endeavour-

ing to purge ourselves from all earthly alloy, and from all transient vanities whatever; thereby raising and fitting ourselves for heavenly delights.

But further, not only the transitoriness of these things, but the danger also of abusing them, should warn us to a right conduct.

If the not using the talents committed to our trust, though rendering the whole back again,* entitles to the extreme malediction of "O thou wicked and slothful servant," and to the sentence of being cast into utter darkness, where shall we find terms to express the sufficiency of their deserts, who "abuse" the whole without so much as one virtuous deed to balance the account.

If there be a sin greater than that of hoarding riches together, it is the employing them to useless purposes, and abusing them.

He who in these things despiseth the commandment of God, shall himself be despised of the Lord, for all his creatures are good, and were meant, and sent to us for good, and therefore not to be abused in excess, and misused in order to the heaping up of greater evils upon us at the latter day. But,

Lastly, As great evils will attend the ungodly, so he that in these things is faithful, shall

* Matt. xxv. 25.

shall receive to himself an ample reward. Even in a temporal way faithfulness causeth respect, and to him that useth things aright, do we commit more abundantly.

“If then we, who are evil, know how to bestow good gifts,” and to favour according to equitable treatment, “how much more shall our heavenly Father give” to those who have already approved themselves faithful towards him?

Accordingly we find him declaring, in the person of his Father, that he will amply reward them. “Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things:” “enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

“Hear the words of prudence then, give heed unto her counsels, and store them in thine heart; her maxims are universal, and all the virtues lean upon her; she is the guide and mistress of human life.

“Furnish thyself with the proper accommodations belonging to thy condition, yet spend not to the utmost of what thou canst afford, that the providence of thy youth may be a nurse to the afflicted, as well as a comfort to thy old age. Be moderate in the enjoyment, and it shall remain in thy possession; let thy joy be founded on reason, and to its end shall

“ sorrow be a stranger. Let not thy recrea-
“ tions be expensive, lest the pain of purcha-
“ sing them exceed the pleasure thou hast in
“ their enjoyment; neither let prosperity drive
“ circumspection from before thee, nor abun-
“ dance frugality. He that too much indul-
“ geth in the superfluities of life, shall live to
“ lament the want of its necessities.

“ From the experience of others, therefore,
“ do thou learn wisdom; and from their fail-
“ ings correct thine own faults.

“ Use, but not abuse, the good things be-
“ fore thee.”

S E R M O N LXXXI.

Of the Evil of Intemperance.

I. COR. iii. 17. *“If any Man defile the Temple
“of God, him will God destroy.”*

AFTER the many severe declarations of God, in Scripture, against the foul practices of impurity, whether of intemperance or uncleanness, it may seem strange that Christians should be so blinded to every sense of their duty and interest, as to run counter to every act of soberness and chastity! for we find, in the course of common experience, that men are solicitously cautious to avoid every thing that tends either to their present or future misery. But,

What reason can be alledged (to men pretending such caution, so seemingly self-preserving) for their carelessness, or rather presumptuous proneness to bring on them those complicated evils, which sinful indulgencies are the cause of?

If the dictates of the wise, or even wisdom itself, cannot be regarded, yet one would think the destructive consequences which naturally flow from them should warn every man to avoid them.

That God, by his prophets, hath pronounced a woe to such irregularities and excesses; yea, that it is even a woe to itself, should be a sufficient bar to it, and all inducements thereto.

“Who so defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

Intemperance and uncleanness are the two great sins which more immediately defile us; I shall speak to them separately under these words. And,

First, Of intemperance, and the many ill consequences flowing from thence.

Sobriety is always a virtue, and there is no dispensation in the Christian religion for excess upon any account, or in any kind; nay, the great ends of eating and drinking being to preserve life and health, natural religion itself teaches us, that whatever is more than, or contrary to these ends, as all acts of intemperance are, is also criminal, and contrary to order. Intemperance is irregular, and vicious in itself;

self; it ought therefore, in every kind and degree of it, to be avoided by Christians, who would preserve their innocence, as it is a great and visible occasion of much impiety and disorder, and tends to inflame the passions, to dim the light, dull the powers of reason, and defile the imagination with gross and impure ideas.

It is the express command of our Redeemer, that we “take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged therewith; and so that day, the day of wrath and vengeance, come upon us unawares.”

“Be not filled with wine (saith the Apostle) wherein is excess.”

And again, “Walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness;” yea, “the grace of God hath appeared unto all men, teaching us (in the very first place) to live soberly,” without which we can perform acceptably no one act of religion.

As this vice therefore is so destructive of every right principle and action, St. Paul commands those who are guilty of it to be excluded all Christian communication; with such an one—no, not so much as to eat.

They are so great a scandal to any Christian society, that St. Paul excommunicates them with

with the most notorious offenders: "I have written unto you not to keep company with such." The company they are ranked with by the holy Apostle are, "whoremongers, idolaters, covetous, extortioners," such as are the greatest enemies to God, or most grievous oppressors of their brethren, and, as such, were to be excluded from the church here; so (as the worst consequence of all) we are informed, that without sincere repentance, they will be infallibly shut out from the church triumphant hereafter.

They then "whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame, and who mind earthly things," and can continue in the practice of them, notwithstanding such plain and positive denunciations against them, must either be desperately stupid, or obstinately wicked. But,

It is the nature of all vice to blind the reason, and besot the thinking faculties, otherwise what human being, who boasts a soul of divine original, would incur for such bestial indulgences the dismal penalties annexed? For,

What man is there that doth not know, that ingratitude to God, that health, that fortune, that personal elegance, the peace and order of families, and all the comfort and honour of after-ages, are the sacrifices which men make,

make, who are led by false shame to a riotous course of life?

“Woe unto them (saith the prophet Isaiah)
 “who rise up early in the morning, that they
 “may follow strong drink, and continue until
 “night, till wine inflame them, and the harp
 “and the viol, and the taber, and the pipe,
 “are in their feasts, but they regard not the
 “work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.”

Men are here upbraided by the Prophet with one very ill effect of excess, that it renders them ungrateful to their Maker, and averse to the performance of all religious duties. They forget the person from whom they received such blessings, as if they had nothing more to do than to riot in and enjoy them.

They do not consider (says the Prophet) that they are “the operation of God’s hands;” or (as the Apostle tells us of meats and drinks) that “they are the works of God, created by him, to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth.”

Again, What fatal effects hath excess on the health, which it gradually impairs, and wastes away, amidst a sad train of many and tormenting diseases, and at length totally destroys.

Excess of any kind makes the body weak, weary, and languid, yea, and nourishes and raises

raises in it an unnatural ferment, the cause of many sharp and incurable disorders.

Even the very marks of its unwholesomeness are frequently, but too justly, decyphered upon the signature of the face of the intemperate.

The sacred history will afford us many instances of the bad effects of the vice before us. The wise King of Israel considered it as very heinous, and the many inconveniencies which do frequently attend it are elegantly described by him thus: "Who (saith he) hath woe? "who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? "who hath babblings? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? they "that tarry long at the wine; they that go to "seek mixt wine."

The dangers and mischiefs of it are yet further described by him:

"Thine eyes shall behold strange women,
"and thine heart shall utter perverse things,
"and thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the
"midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon
"the top of a mast;" i. e. thou shalt be in the
"midst of danger, and yet know it not: "They
"have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was
"not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it
"not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet
"again."

It is the great unhappiness of this sin, that when a man is once accustomed to it, there is scarce any possibility of leaving it; it then requires excess, as its natural nourishment; it droops and languishes without it. The appetite, the more it has this way been indulged, grows the more craving and insatiable; so that though a man may be sensible of the great dangers and many mischiefs his sin has exposed him to, yet it is very seldom that he grows so much master of himself, as that either his own reflections, or the reasons and persuasions of others, do prevail with him to forsake it.

But further, It is no less prejudicial to the mind, by weakening and debilitating its powers, as it not only destroys the sensitive faculty, but takes off also from the time of improvement.

Those who make no other use of life than for intemperance, never employ their faculties; their reasoning is idle, and their understanding lies fallow. Hence it is that but too many surpass other people only in glutting their appetites, and are as poor in knowledge as they are rich in estates.

Every fit of intemperance is a short phrenzy, which leaves the mind in a stupid and sottish posture; and sometimes downright madness has ensued upon it: and, as there is so ill an influence

influence upon the understanding from this sin, so likewise doth it as much corrupt and deprave the will.

The prophet Hosea tells us that "wine, and new wine, take away the heart;" they change its dispositions and inclinations, make it averse to religion and virtue, and fill it with the worst of passions.

Thus are the effects of excess truly hurtful to the mind, and destructive of every right principle: though for the present, i. e. in the immediate act, it may seem pleasant, yet at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

"The nearest approach we can make to happiness on this side the grave, is to enjoy from Heaven understanding and health.

"Those blessings if thou possessest then, and wouldst retain to old age, avoid the allurements of voluptuousness, and fly from her temptations.

"When she spreadeth her delicacies on the board, when her wine sparkleth in the cup, when she smileth upon thee, and persuadeth thee to be joyful and happy, then is the hour of danger; then let reason stand firmly on her guard.

"For, if thou hearkenest unto her words, thou art betrayed.

The

“ The joy which she promiseth changeth to
 “ madness, and her enjoyments lead on to dis-
 “ eases and death.

“ Look round her board, cast thine eyes
 “ upon her guests, and observe those who have
 “ been allured by her smiles, who have listened
 “ to her temptations.

“ Are they not meagre? Are they not sick-
 “ ly? Are they not spiritless?

“ Their short hours of jollity and riot are
 “ followed by tedious days of pain and dejection.
 “ She hath debauched and palled their appetites,
 “ that they have now no relish for her nicest
 “ dainties; her votaries are become her victims,
 “ the just and natural consequence which God
 “ hath ordained in the constitution of things, for
 “ the punishment of those who abuse his gifts.”

But further, how fearful are the effects of it
 often to the circumstances? Men who are
 slaves to this vice not only give the knavish
 and crafty the most dangerous advantages over
 them in their temporal affairs, but are abso-
 lutely incapacitated thereby for a right dis-
 charge of the business of their proper stations,
 sufficiently contented to waste their hours in
 the company of those who are as trifling, as
 worthless, and as unthinking as themselves;
 whilst their unhappy families are suffered to
 languish in poverty and distress, and are often

together with them brought to the greatest want. O shame to human reason, and to themselves! How full of inhumanity, and devoid of natural affection to those who ought to be dearest to them, must such men be!

How provoking this sin is in the eyes of God, sufficiently appears from the woes and threatenings which in Scripture are denounced against it.

“Woe to you that are full (saith our Saviour) for ye shall hunger.” And can there be a juster judgment than that they, who waste and abuse the good things which God hath given them for their nourishment and support, should, after such abuse, be denied even the moderate and convenient use of their wonted enjoyments?

The observation which Solomon made concerning luxury and intemperance, for the most part, holds good, viz. “He that loveth wine and oil, or delicious fare, shall not be rich:” And again,

“The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness (the effect of those vices) shall cloath a man with rags.”

All this is truly natural, being no other than the just consequences of the loss of time, and neglect of business occasioned hereby, together with the expence of it, especially to those whose labour

labour is their livelihood. Moreover, what a brand doth this vice fix upon the reputation, and what bar is it to business, and the faithful communications of friendship?

It is a very ill property and effect of this sin, that as it makes a man unfit to advise and govern himself, so it renders him incapable of receiving advice, or of being governed by others: "Wine (says Solomon) is a mocker, strong drink is raging;" i. e. it scoffs at all good counsel, or else it enrages them against those friends who are so faithful as to give it them; "wherefore (says he) whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Besides, who knows not that they who are guilty of this vice, are disposed to various crimes, and prepared for the greatest.

Excess, especially of drinking, exposes men to all the assaults and temptations of our adversary the Devil, "who goeth about continually, seeking whom he may devour;" and, finding men so unarmed of reason, and the assistance of grace, he cannot but easily succeed in his malicious designs against them; the temptation (be it what it will) can hardly fail of its effect, there being no power from within to withstand it. When the use and command of reason is lost, the sense of conscience extinguished, and the presence of God's holy spirit

removed and banished from the soul, what folly and wickedness are not men capable of at such times? "When the light within them is darkness, how great is that darkness?"

But if death (to which we are every moment subject) should happen then to surprise us, how exceeding dreadful must be the consequences of it to men thus laden with iniquity, and surcharged with excess?

But, where men are not led to gross evils, nor any such fatal accidents attend them, who can help remarking how despicable they make themselves appear in the eyes of the judicious and sober?—so contemptible, that could they but once see themselves in that situation, they could not fail but despise themselves, and avoid (as a scorpion) that excess which so disguises and destroys all that is rational in them.

What hath been already observed is not only infamous herein, in common with other vices, but hath also certain circumstances peculiar to itself, which tend to lessen a man in the eyes of the world; it enlarges every flaw in the mind, and lays open his most secret failings.

A man that is sober may conceal his own defects, out of regard to the judgment of others concerning him; and though he is not upon this account a better man, he makes however a more decent appearance.

But

But wine prompts a man to throw off this veil, and to expose, with equal impudence and folly, the latent blemishes of his soul, in their utmost deformity; yea, and not only this, but leads him oftentimes to perpetrate such things as he is not naturally prone to, the commission of which, when sober, he may even shudder to recollect.

Prophaneness, obscenity, impudence, and a neglect of all the rules of decency and good manners, is the common effect of habitual intemperance; add to these, a wild license of speech, folly in divulging his own, and baseness in betraying the secrets of his friend.

Excess then makes way for all manner of depravity, introducing into the minds of men the most fatal disorders, and into their lives a long train of detestable vices, whose consequences, in the end, may be for ever fatal.

Such is the life, how much more miserable then must be the death, of the intemperate?

As to a future state, the Scriptures (in which Almighty God hath revealed his unchangeable purpose) expressly declare that "drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." In vain, therefore, will be our faith, or prayers, or other religious observances; in vain do we assume the garb of sanctity, and regularly attend

on divine institutions, if by these things we propose to atone for this and our other impieties. Unless to piety and devotion we add temperance and purity of heart and life, we have no reason to hope for happiness hereafter; so that not only the health and fortune, the reputation and virtue, but all the peace also of such a man, must necessarily be destroyed.

In a word, there being so much of impiety and ingratitude towards God, for the most part, accompanying this sin of intemperance, it is no wonder that, in his holy word, he has declared himself so severely against it; yea,

His great detestation and abhorrence of it sufficiently appears from the particular judgments he has in this life so frequently inflicted upon it. The prophet Ezekiel tells us what was the dreadful overthrow of Sodom, and the cities round about her.

“Fullness of bread, i. e. luxury, and an abundance of idleness (says he) was in her;” for which reason God rained upon her fire and brimstone, the very ingredients of hell torments. But there is no occasion for us to confine ourselves to this example only, since almost daily experience convinces us of the many incidents hereby occasioned.

Death frequently, and sometimes accidents of no small import, and of lingering effect, which

which makes death frequently more eligible; and how can it be otherwise, or that such examples should not be thus frequent, it being the nature of the sin itself to provoke both God and man, and exposes men most of all to danger, when they are least able to withstand it, or guard against either the greatest or smallest accidents that may oppose them. "Take heed, then, lest that day come upon you un-
"awares."

From the whole then it is evident, that the fruit of intemperance is misery both here and hereafter.

I shall conclude with a few rules and directions, as means whereby to recall and preserve us from this destructive vice, and to guard us against all excess whatever.

First, Let as many as have already indulged themselves into an habit, consider that they are in a state of the worst kind of slavery—a slavery of reason to appetite—a slavery of the human to the brutal part. Let them, therefore, instantly resolve to assert the freedom and dignity of their nature, that though they have hitherto lived like beasts, they may, in the end, die like men. Let them (in a religious way) look back and see how they have hitherto abused the blessings of God, and with how much goodness he has borne with their provocations, and waited
for

for their amendment; and let the sense of his mercy, and their own vileness, breed in their hearts that godly shame and sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, "not to be repented of."

If neither the force of reason nor religion will do, let "the terrors of the Lord persuade" them not to trifle away their souls, by continuing in a course which they know must end so shortly in eternal destruction.

If they say "it is a difficult work," the proper answer is, that "it is a necessary work;" and, if men will but think, it can bear no long consideration, whether they shall be uneasy now in the reforming their evil habit, or by indulging it, be miserable for ever. Where this is the choice, the true inference from the difficulty of the work is to rouse themselves to equal degrees of resolution to go through it, and the more sensible they are of their own weakness, the more earnest ought they to be in their prayers to God, to strengthen and assist them.

It must be owned, that the condition of such persons, though not desperate, is exceeding dangerous; and, it were to be wished, that the instances of men's delivering themselves out of it were more common than they are. But the more dangerous their condition is, and the more rare the instances of men's being delivered herefrom,

Herefrom, the more powerful warnings are they to others, who are in a good measure innocent, or as yet less guilty, not to be betrayed into the same sinful indulgences.

In order to this great end, the best way will be to keep the reins over the appetites of our youth, and to accustom them to frequent restraints, for hereby they will be much more tractable.

In all virtues, one of the first and most important rules is, "to resist beginnings," since no man can tell to what lengths he may be carried, who has once given way to vice. Let us accustom ourselves, therefore, in the beginning, to frequent and persevering self-denials; they are necessary means to preserve innocence, as they keep us not only from falling into excess, but at a proper distance also from the brink of destruction.

If men suffer themselves to come in the way of excess, and to go to the utmost bounds of things lawful, they may lose the reins, and be plunged from the edge of the precipice on which they have too incautiously ventured.

There is no way to be so safe and innocent as to keep an habitual guard upon the appetite, out of a due sense of the true ends and uses for which these things were given us, and of the great wickedness of abusing the blessings of

of God, to the dishonour of his religion, and the reproach of ourselves, of the fatal consequences of such indulgences both to the body and the soul, and of the unspeakable misery of living and dying in habits of excess, both with respect to this world and the next.

To these considerations we must add frequent and earnest prayer to God, that he would preserve a lively sense of them upon our minds, and graciously afford such supplies of spiritual strength as he sees needful to prevent these evil habits, and to give an effectual check to all such acts of irregularity and excess as lead to them.

But, besides what hath been already said, we must be careful to avoid ensnaring company. It is Solomon's advice, "Be not among wine bibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh." All bad company is pernicious enough, but in this case is peculiarly so.

Let us therefore respect our characters, as we are men, and as we are Christians, and not disgrace either by a slavish attachment to the lowest and most sordid of animal gratifications.

If to these considerations we subjoin others, on the frail and uncertain tenor of our present existence, on the unreasonableness of indulging to excess that body, which must ere long moulder in the dust, on the horrid consequences

quences which will attend our departure from this world in habits of excess, a state how unfit to meet the great and holy judge!

Such reflections as these (and they are what naturally offer themselves to us) must certainly tend to make us temperate in all things, to "be sober, and in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which" these things were given us.

S E R M O N LXXXII.

Sobriety, &c. in Opposition to Intemperance, &c.

I. COR. ix. 25. *“Every man that striveth for the
“Mastery is temperate in all Things.”*

“THE Grace of God, which bringeth salvation,” (says the Apostle) or which is the same thing, the Gospel of our Saviour Christ, “teaches us, that denying ungodliness
“and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, as
“well as righteously and godly, in this present world.”

Sobriety is the guard of virtue, as temperance is the safeguard of religion.

In speaking to this virtue, I shall observe the following method.

First, I shall shew the true bounds and limits of it.

Secondly,

Secondly, The obligations we are under in regard hereto, together with the many advantages flowing from it.

Concluding with the enforcement which the Apostle subjoins, in order to excite the same.

And, first, As man consists of a body as well as a soul, there is a duty, no doubt, owing to the former as well as to the latter, especially as they are so nearly connected together, as according to their different estates, to have different effects on each other.

But, as the soul is confessedly the superior and more important part, it is evidently our duty to attend to the body as subordinate thereto, and so only to take care of its health and well-being, as thereby to maintain the constant dominion and superiority of the soul; and so long as this due subordination is kept up and maintained, so long we may be justly said to be sober and temperate; and the moment we destroy it, by giving the animal part the superiority, from thence we may be said to deviate herefrom, and the more frequently we degrade it, the wider is our deviation, and we are proportionably guilty of greater excess. This clearly cuts off all their pretences, who think that no man is to be stiled intemperate, but he who disguises himself so much as to be

devoid almost of all animal, as well as rational powers.

All indulgences that are beyond the real refreshment of body and mind, are sinful in the eyes of God, and lay men under the same condemnation in kind, if not in degree, with excess itself.

But how far each of us may go herein without being filed intemperate, is not precisely to be determined; the constitutions, ages, and other circumstances among mankind, being so different from one another; nay, the same constitution, so different from itself, according to different times and seasons, there can be therefore no one fixed rule or measure in this point; because the same proportion which to me is not sufficient, may to another be excess: so that what proportion is necessary or convenient, what is within the bounds of moderation, and what not, must in great measure be left to the judgment of every particular Christian, upon an honest and conscientious regard to the true ends and uses of the things before us, which are “the preserving of life,” “the refreshing of the spirits,” and “the preparation of ourselves for the business of the station wherein providence hath placed us”—within which bounds we may all of us walk, “soberly, as in the day.” But,

Secondly,

Secondly, Of the obligations we are under hereto, and of the many advantages we may expect from the virtue before us. And here,

If we listen to the voice of nature and reason, it surely highly becomes us to guard the welfare of all our powers, by having a particular regard hereto, and not enslave them by this single vice.

The indulgence is too mean for a man, much more for a Christian.

Besides, doth not reason convince us of our duty herein, and convict us of the basest ingratitude to God, when we abuse, to our present and future prejudice, those favours and comforts which, in liberal bounty, he hath granted for our support and refreshment? Can any thing be more vile than to dishonour the generous and beneficent giver, even with his own gifts?

Temperance then, and the using the good things of this life with moderation, is evidently our duty.

But, if reason alone requires this soberness from us, how much more are we obliged to it in obedience to the Gospel of our Lord, who, together with his followers, do so frequently, in express terms, inculcate it? "Be temperate
"in all things; be sober, and watch unto
"prayer," joining it with almost every duty,

and without which scarce any one virtue can be rightly performed ; and, as to its advantages, they also are equally obligatory upon us, if we allow ourselves to be touched with the common feelings of all men. Now here,

So many and great, and at the same time so very evident are these to us, that but barely to mention them might be a sufficient recommendation of the virtue before us. But we are not so scanty in particulars as to leave it thus imperfect, it being fully replete with every recommendation to the reasonable part of mankind.

Fortune, health, ease, and pleasure, each of them being increased and assured by it; our credit is also hereby confirmed in the world, our character established, and the confidence of mankind gained, being carested by every considerate person as the supporter of society, and the criterion of good manners.

Besides, we hereby avoid innumerable temptations, and are at all times fit for the service of our God, ourselves, and all around us; not to add the unspeakable blessings which God hath promised to it hereafter, and which also, from its very nature, it is qualified to enjoy.

It is certain, in the first place, that the man who is temperate is in a very promising way to improve his outward circumstances; for, wealth is commonly the fruit of industry, and that

that temperance qualifies for it, we are sufficiently instructed by daily observation; for,

Whereas intemperance prevents us from gaining more, it commonly dissipates by its extravagancies what we already have; whilst temperance (on the other hand) leaves a man both time and opportunity, as well as capacity and inclination, for the diligent prosecution of every employment. Besides,

Temperance is satisfied with a little, and therefore reserves for future exigencies what extravagance consumes in its repetition of excesses, or in new and more costly methods of indulgence. But,

Let us suppose (for it is not always the case) that temperance should not raise us to a distinction in life, how and what are the effects of it then before us?

Even in a state of poverty and narrow limits, the effects of this virtue are greatly to be preferred before those of the opposite vice.

The man that hath always used himself to a temperate life, will be contented and chearful even in narrow circumstances, for he hath moderate appetites, and but few wants, and they are easily satisfied and supplied;—whereas they who, through excess, fall into divers distresses, (and it is but too naturally their case) poverty is to them most intolerable, they cannot de-

scend to meanness, want, and indigence, without great and exceeding reluctance; nor have they then either the means or the ability from whence to be supplied, and are therefore justly left to repine at their condition, and are mortified at the remembrance of past pleasures, now no more to be enjoyed; add to this, that even charity itself is deadened towards them, as on account of their former excesses they deserve the less pity; whereas the temperate man, should he by any casualty be reduced, as he can justly claim, so is he as liberally relieved. So that in whatever view we consider temperance, it hath by much the advantage in every state and condition of life.

But further, temperance is a promoter of health, the body hereby gains comeliness, and strength and activity; it “makes a man’s countenance to shine,” enlarging every faculty of sense and ingenuity, rendering us at once both firm and active.

“Who (says an elegant author) is she that
“with grateful steps, and with a lively air,
“trips over yonder plain?”

“The rose blusheth on her cheeks, the
“sweetness of the morning breatheth from her
“lips; joy, tempered with innocence and mo-
“desty, sparkleth in her eyes, and from the
“cheerfulness

“cheerfulness of her heart she singeth as she
“walks;

“Her name is Health, the daughter of Ex-
“ercise and Temperance; their sons inhabit
“the mountains.

“They are brave, active, and lively, and
“partake of every grace and beauty.

“Vigour stringeth their nerves, strength
“dwelleth in their bones, and labour is their
“delight all the day long.

“The employments of their father excite
“their appetites, and the repasts of their mo-
“ther refresh them,

“To combat the passions is their delight;
“to conquer evil habits their glory.

“Their pleasures are moderate, and there-
“fore they endure; their repose is short, but
“sound and undisturbed.

“Their blood is pure, their minds are serene,
“and the physician findeth not the way to their
“habitations.”

The temperate man hath in all things the
advantage.

Moderate indulgence, with plain simples, sit
easy upon us, digest without difficulty, and are
succeeded by pleasing thoughts and lively con-
ceptions; all which the intemperate may for
ever wish for, but can never enjoy; yea, the
temperate man's pleasures are durable, because
they

they are regular, and all his life is calm and serene, because it is innocent.

They who have happily inured themselves in the paths of temperance may easily recollect, in a thousand instances perhaps, the truth of what is here observed.

Heaven be praised we are not yet arrived to those dregs of time as generally to approve a debauched character, or to hold temperance and moderation in cheap account; we still allow them, though perhaps not their due share, yet some degree of their respective merits and deserts.

With whatever indulgence the debauched may sometimes be treated, or how highly soever they may think of themselves, yet the whole creation doth not afford a greater monster than him; nor doth any character in human life appear more despicable and mean to all wise and good men: whereas the temperate are esteemed the truly excellent, as characters of unspotted purity, and their society is no less sought after than admired.

In this I speak the truth and feelings of all the sensible part of mankind.

It is evident then (upon the slightest reflection) that temperance hath very desirable effects, both upon the fortune and body of man, keeping the former (through inspection) from being a prey to the most worthless part of mankind,

kind, and, through diligence, greatly improving it; and the latter in health, ease, and vigour. It is the parent of pleasure, and adds to every enjoyment, greatly confirming our credit amongst men.

Now, if these were the only advantages it produced, a prudent man would be so far from wanting a reward, that nothing would be apt to tempt him to be otherwise. But,

We proceed now further to observe, that temperance qualifies a man for the offices of life, and makes him useful and honourable in all relations.

This indeed might be most clearly manifested from the opposite character, of that total disservice which intemperance renders a man of; now, if intemperance disqualifies a man for every service of life, temperance therefore must be that alone, or chiefly, which must render him every way serviceable.

As the sottish or glutton is fit neither to govern nor be governed—is fit neither to be a father nor friend—so the temperate, on the other hand, fills every place and station of life with a becoming grace—is he that governs wisely, and prudently submits to every wise government.

If we were to run over all the offices and employments of life, we shall find, that as intemperance

perance is but an ill qualification for any of them, and renders a man less useful and valuable in life, let the rank and station he holds in it be what it will, so temperance qualifies for any of them, and renders men useful and serviceable in all.

The foregoing discourse carrying with it its own exhortation, I need but briefly touch upon what I intend now, viz.

The reason which the Apostle here gives more strongly to induce us thereto,

The advantages of temperance in the eyes of every considerate man, have always been looked upon as the greatest ornament of life, and chief assistant to every acquirement. "He that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible."

Temperance is no less a condition of present success, than of future felicity.

As much, then, as things eternal exceed things only of temporal concernment, so much more ought we to be concerned for it, and in proportion as we neglect it, we shall be more or less inexcusable.

If the inducement only of temporal things be sufficient to engage the attention of the worldly-minded, so as to make them "keep
" their

“their bodies under, and in subjection,”—of how much more incitement to this purpose must be the things which are of everlasting concern? “They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.”

Upon the whole then, let it be our fixed resolution, at all times, and in all companies, to preserve our due decorum of temperance and moderation. This will conduce to our outward prosperity and success in this world, and be a good step toward establishing a firm and lasting reputation; this will contribute, not a little, to the health and ease both of our body and mind; this will be one excellent qualification for being serviceable in society, and for creating in mankind a confidence in us; this will prepare us at once for a life the most pleasant and honourable.

In a word, in this plain and humble virtue of temperance and moderation is the foundation laid of every other virtue, and consequently of happiness both here and hereafter.

Let us therefore be particularly heedful hereto, and (agreeable to that of the Apostle) “whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, let us do it with moderation and thanksgiving, to the praise and glory of God;” and which will also turn to our own especial good account and benefit.

S E R M O N LXXXIII.

Of the great Evil of Uncleannefs.

I. COR. iii. 17. *“ If any Man defile the Temple
“ of God, him will God destroy.”*

OF all the vices which reign amongst us, to the great scandal of our religion, and no less danger to the public, there are none which require, or deserve to be reprov'd with greater sharpness, than those of fornication and uncleanness.

But the greatest misfortune here is, that at the same time that they are most necessary to be reformed, they are the hardest to be dealt with.

The foulness and inconveniencies of other sins may be expos'd, so as to give men an abhorrence of them ; but the most grave and serious arguments here, upon this subject, seldom have any better effect, than to be the subject of jest and ridicule. But yet,

Not-

Notwithstanding, among all the duties variously inculcated in the sacred writings, there is none which is more frequently encouraged than chastity; or (on the other hand) any thing more vehemently spoken against and discouraged, than is the vice of fornication and uncleanness—and with reason sufficient; for, from the beauteous features of the virtue of chastity, from the crown of glory, which will be the reward of those who live and die in the practice of that and her sister virtues; from the fatal consequences, and filthy nature of the opposite vice, the necessity of cherishing the one, and avoiding the other, doth sufficiently appear.

In order, therefore, to do something whereby to discourage this sin of uncleanness, I shall,

First, Shew the heinousness of it, and how odious it is to God and all good men, together with the obligations we lie under to abstain herefrom; and then,

Secondly, Some of the numberless ill-consequences which naturally destroy the present, as well as future welfare of those who are abandoned to it.

As to the heinousness of the sin, it appears plainly, from its direct opposition to the law of God, not only to the seventh command-

ment, but also to that law of nature, which he has written in the heart of every man; for,

Long before the giving of the law by Moses, we have instances in Scripture, which shew how infamous this sin was, and how it drew down the vengeance both of God and man, as particularly in the cases of Pharaoh and Abimelech, with relation to Sarah, Abraham's wife, and in that of Simeon and Levi, who justified the cruelty they exercised upon the men of Sechem, because "Sechem their Prince had dealt
"with their sister Dinah, as with an harlot."

But mankind being grown so corrupt, that they had, in a manner, lost the sense of all moral good and evil, and being so universally addicted to incontinency and uncleanness, that the law of nature had not force enough to restrain them from it, God, out of a tender regard to his people, was pleased to give them an express prohibition, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;"—which is of so large extent, that it reacheth all unclean acts whatever.

The sins of adultery, and of fornication, are so odious in the eyes of God, that we read, "he would not suffer that there should be any
"whore of the daughters of Israel."

The Gospel of our blessed Saviour, as it is a much purer dispensation than that of the law, so it forbids not only all outward acts of uncleanness,

cleanness, but also all impure thoughts and desires of the heart.

Though these are transacted wholly within ourselves, and never break forth into open offence; yet because God is as privy to them as we ourselves are, they are therefore interpreted by him accordingly.

It is evident from the most cursory view of the Gospel, that the great end and design of it is to purify the soul from sin and defilement, and to restore us to that state of holiness and perfection which may fit us for the enjoyment of God, and of Heaven hereafter.

Accordingly our blessed Lord, in his very first sermon, enlarges greatly on actual and mental uncleanness, and recommends the most severe self-mortification (if we find it necessary) to subdue this defiling lust.

He useth the strongest metaphors, and tells us, that what is dear and useful to us, even as a right eye, or a right hand, if causing us to offend, should rather be given up, than that our souls be lost eternally through their sinful indulgences.

The sacred writings are also conformable throughout to these declarations. No offences are mentioned more frequently, or with more severity, than those against chastity.

The Apostles and Elders (the first time they met in council at Jerusalem, in the first decree

they made for the good of the Church) enjoin Christians to "abstain from fornication as well as from idolatry," both being equally destructive to our salvation. Indeed,

As this vice is not of the least malignant nature, we therefore find it enumerated amidst the most detestable crimes; and such (as without all doubt) exclude from Heaven, if unrepented of.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest," saith St. Paul, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness," words these which comprize every species of impurity, from the highest to the lowest, and give the licentious no room to evade.

"Of these works (says he), to which he joins "all others of evil name;—of these, I tell you "before, as I have also told you in times past, "that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Again,

He charges us, that "fornication and all "uncleanness should not once be named amongst us, as becometh saints;" he would have no occasion given for so much as mentioning so abominable a sin, and the reason immediately follows: "For ye know that no "whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any "inheritance in the kingdom of God, and of "Christ;"

S E R M O N LXXXIII. 197

“Christ;” and “whoremongers and adulter-
“ers God will judge.”

There is no need to multiply texts to this purpose; these are but too sufficient for the condemnation of the impure, and who, if they will but consult the sacred writ, will find many more equally plain, and which, no less than these, condemn every species and degree of uncleanness.

But further (and agreeable to the text), be it observed, that there are two or three considerations peculiar to the Christian religion, which lay all its possessors under the highest obligations to abstain herefrom.

St. Paul urges two of these in his first epistle to the Corinthians; the one taken from our union with Christ, as his members; the other from the habitation of the Holy Ghost within us, as his temple;—arguments these which must affect every Christian with the strongest sense of the baseness and defilement of all uncleanness.

When we have the happiness to be united to a Saviour, who took our nature upon him to redeem us, shall we thus requite, and thank the Lord for that highest privilege thus conferred upon us? Nay, let us ever join with St. Paul in an indignant “God forbid,” whenever tempted to such offences, and remembering

that our bodies are the members of Christ, let us not defile, but consecrate them in purity to his glory.

But further, let us reflect how fearful a thing it is to desecrate a temple, and to unhallow the place which the blessed spirit himself inhabits.

“What! know ye not that your bodies are
“the temples of the Holy Ghost, which is gi-
“ven you, which ye have of God, and ye are
“not your own?” And shall we pollute this
temple? nay, if we do pollute it, let us remem-
ber what is said, “the temple of God is holy,
“which temple ye are;” and, “if any man
“defile the temple of God, him will God de-
“stroy.”

Nothing can be added more to shew the dire consequences of this vice, or whereby more strongly to express our obligations to the contrary virtue, after words like these: “If any
“man defile the temple of God, him will God
“destroy.”

Let us therefore be careful to act according to the Apostle’s conclusion, and be warned by these motives, from thus sinning against our God, our Saviour, and the Holy Ghost, while we are careful to “glorify God in our body,
“and in our spirit, which are God’s.” But,

Secondly, Besides these high obligations to abstain from fornication, many others arise
from

from the numberless, and almost necessary ill consequences to our present, as well as future welfare herefrom : consequences which serve no less to manifest the evils of impurity, than the advantages of the opposite virtue.

The Apostle, after advising us to “ abstain
“ from fornication. and all uncleanness, and
“ not even to name it, as becometh saints,”
adds the doom of their lot, viz. to be cut off
from the kingdom of Christ, and his inheritance for ever.

“ Be not deceived (says he) with vain
“ words, for because of these things cometh the
“ wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

We read of many temporal afflictions by God on this sin, besides that of our eternal future destruction on this account.

No sooner was the world increased, but we find that God was most highly provoked at the wickedness of it, “ for all flesh had corrupted
“ his way before him.”

By what we read, it is very probable that they were the sins of uncleanness, and of unnatural lusts, which so incensed the vengeance of God, that he “ resolved to destroy both man
“ and beast from off the face of the earth,” and to send that universal deluge, “ wherein the
“ world

“ world that then was (being overflowed with
“ water) perished.”

The judgments which befel “ Sodom and
“ Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are
“ likewise set forth to us for example, as suf-
“ fering the vengeance of eternal fire,” which
was so dreadful, that it was the very figure
and representation of hell itself, and the causes
of it are expressly declared by St. Jude to be,
that “ they gave themselves over to fornica-
“ tion, and going after strange flesh.”

Not only the act of adultery, but the desires
or intentions of it, are so abhorred by God,
that we read, “ he plagued Pharoah and his
“ house with great plagues,”* and he threat-
ened Abimelech with death for the design
which each of them had upon Abraham’s wife.†
By such severities as these, God declared his
hatred of this sin, when as yet mankind had no
written law to direct them in their duty.

After the law was delivered by Moses, God
commanded him to “ hang up the rulers and
“ princes of the people,” because either they
themselves “ committed whoredom with the
“ daughters of Moab,” or connived at those
that did so. But,

The wrath of God was not thus satisfied ;
for the Apostle tells us, that “ of them who
“ committed fornication, there fell in one day
“ three

* Gen. xii. 17. † Ditto xx. iii.

“ three and twenty thousand—so mightily did
 “ the wrath of God prevail.”

These are extraordinary examples of God's vengeance ; but it was a fixed and standing law to the Jews, that adultery should be punished with death, and, though there is no obligation upon any other nation to conform thereto, yet many wise and well governed states have done it in this particular ; and there is scarce any people but who have, by one rigorous sort of punishment or other, declared their detestation of so foul a crime ; and they who have not thought fit to punish it with death, have yet appointed the most ignominious penalties for it, the marks of which upon the offender were intended as monuments of shame and infamy, to deter others from following his example. But further,

The malignity of this vice will yet further appear, if we take a view of the mischiefs and inconveniencies that men suffer by it.

Dissatisfaction, inquietude, and restlessness of soul, ever dwell with the lustful impure ; it degrades the soul, and at the same time that it extinguishes the light of truth and virtue, it sensualizes every rational faculty ; it is naturally followed by a train of many and pernicious vices. Idleness, and the grossest intemperance, are its never-failing attendants ; pride and
 luxury

luxury dwell with it, broils and contentions, yea, and often murder itself.

But, besides this train of enormous evils, what fatal mischiefs doth this vice bring upon the reputation? what irremediable destruction to the circumstances? and too often exciting men to illicit means of procuring gain, by which to satisfy their lustful inclinations;—means which, in numberless examples, have proved the destruction of life, and finished a shameful course, by a still more shameful death. But further, besides its sad effects to the reputation, the estate, and life, with what evils to the body is this crime attended?

“ His bones (says Job) are full of the sins of
“ his youth, which shall lie down with him
“ in the dust;” yea, he is consumed in the
midst of his days, or drags through life in a miserable disorder.

“ The madness of desire shall defeat its own
“ pursuits, and from the blindness of its rage
“ thou shalt rush upon destruction.

“ Therefore give not up thy heart to any
“ sweet enticements, neither suffer thy soul to
“ be enslaved by enchanting delusions.

“ The fountain of health, which must supply the stream of pleasure, shall quickly be
“ dried up, and every spring of joy shall be
“ exhausted.

“ In

“ In the prime of thy life old age shall over-
 “ take thee, and thy sun shall decline in the
 “ morning of thy days.

“ Thy health, thy strength, thy beauty and
 “ activity, are all enfeebled, and decay hereby;
 “ shame followeth, and disease, and want, and
 “ care, and repentance.

“ Enfeebled by dalliance, with luxury pam-
 “ pered, and softened by sloth, strength shall
 “ forsake thy limbs, and health thy constitu-
 “ tion. Thy days shall be few, and those
 “ inglorious; thy griefs shall be many, yet meet
 “ with no compassion.” But,

Though these consequences are fatal and
 alarming enough, yet, what are they? what
 are all merely corporal punishments, compared
 to the anguish which arises from an uneasy and
 distressed conscience? a conscience assured that
 by these vices, unrepented, all hopes of Hea-
 ven and happiness are forfeited; that God and
 his blessed Son are armed in vengeance against
 the sinner, and that every attribute, as well of
 power as mercy, is not only offended, but en-
 gaged to punish and condemn.

These are consequences which no man can
 avoid, while he continues in the practice of
 this vice, which wholly incapacitates him for
 all the duties of religion, and every advantage
 of virtue.

S E R M O N LXXXIV.

On the great Duty and Virtue of Chastity,
the Opposite to Uncleanness.

THESS. iv. 4. *“That every one of you should know
“how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and
“Honour.”*

THE Apostle, in the chapter preceding my text, testifieth his great love to the Thessalonians, as manifested in many particulars; and here he exhorteth them to go forward in all manner of godliness.

“Furthermore (says he) we beseech you,
“brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus,
“that as ye have received of us how you ought
“to walk, and to please God, so ye would
“abound more and more.”

After this general exhortation, he proceedeth to the enforcement of many particulars, of which the great duty and virtue of chastity hath the first place.

“This

“ This (says he) is the will of God, even
 “ your sanctification, that ye abstain from for-
 “ nication, that every one of you should know
 “ how to possess his vessel in sanctification and
 “ honour, and not in the lusts of concupi-
 “ scence, even as the Gentiles, who know not
 “ God.”

This argument he more copiously pursues,
 and which, in the following discourse, I shall
 endeavour to illustrate and settle, under the fol-
 lowing particulars :

First, As to its nature, so far as (in inge-
 nuity) prudence will permit.

Secondly, The means how ; and then,

Thirdly, The reasons why we should be
 particularly heedful hereto.

As to the virtue itself, much surely need not
 here be spoken, save that it consists in per-
 fectly abstaining from all kinds of uncleanness,
 not only of the more gross acts, but even also
 of the more refined sorts of it, however com-
 mitted, and reaches even to the lowest degree
 of impurity, and guards the very thoughts and
 interests of our hearts from all pollution what-
 ever.

The Apostle, by treating and inculcating
 this virtue in general terms, makes the duty
 more confirmed ; that being a modest intima-

tion by a general term of actions, that cannot with decency be particularly named.

For the same reason it must not be expected that I should here enlarge upon the several branches of the virtue before us, and wherein it more immediately and particularly consists; or (to set it off in a better light by its opposite vice) discuss the several ways by which the sin of uncleanness pollutes.

There is danger even in descending to the niceties of these things, lest inclinations (so strong by nature) should take an advantage never intended them, and thereby learn to refine upon vice, from the very ideas raised in the mind, by those who only design them for their instruction and amendment.

It shall suffice me, therefore, upon this occasion, to remark, that the sanctification here required by the Apostle is a virtue extended both to the mind and body; that all gratifications of our fleshly desires, out of the way of lawful contract, however committed, are a violation of the duty and virtue before us.

That not only actual commissions, but also all obscene language, lascivious looks, impure thoughts indulged, immodest behaviour, pampering and luxurious diet to inflame ourselves, and industrious endeavours to kindle those fires, and attract first the eyes, and then the desires
of

of others; all studied forms and affectation in dress or deportment, which have a tendency that way—all these come within the compass of uncleanness, and is a polluting that “vessel which we are to preserve in sanctification and honour;” and, though they miss of the effect, yet are they rendered guilty by the intention; all these, therefore, must be avoided by us, if we would obtain and preserve the great duty and virtue of chastity now before us.*

The less capable this subject is of being conveniently treated by us, the more exact and curious it becomes all private persons to be in the examination of their own consciences concerning it, especially since the Apostle hath used such pressing motives to it, expressly affirming that our sanctification is the commandment of the Lord Jesus, and “the will of God;” that the contrary affections are the scandal of the “Gentiles who know not God:” that Christians “are called not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness;” and that all those who behave themselves unsuitably to that call, draw down vengeance upon their own head, and “despise God, and the Holy Spirit which he hath given us.” But,

Secondly, I am to lay before you the several means to be used, whereby to acquire and preserve chastity, and that we may more particu-

larly "know how to possess our vessels in sanctification and honour." And here,

The best advice we can take is that of Solomon: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;" which also is again confirmed by our Saviour, with the reason alledged: "Out of the heart (says he) proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, uncleanness."

The rise and beginning of all wickedness is from thence; we must therefore keep so strict a guard upon it, that no unclean thought, nor defiled imagination, be suffered either to enter in or dwell there.

For, though we are sure that they would never break forth into real acts, yet they themselves are actions in the sight of God, and he will impute them to us as sins of the same kind or order as they would be of, if they were outwardly committed.

Let us therefore guard well our thoughts; it is of infinitely more moment than we may at first conceive, to check them in the very first tendencies to impurity.

The first step is to cleanse that fountain, the heart, from whence all evil proceeds; for, he who takes delight in impure wishes and imaginations, will scarce abstain from the outward gross act, when a strong temptation is in the way,

way, and a fair opportunity of secrecy invites him to it; and it is but just in God to deliver him into the power of his lust, in order that he may reap the shame thereof; and it is natural for lust, when it hath been long indulged in the imagination, to "conceive and bring forth sin."

He that forbears the grosser act, and yet allows himself in any of these, it is greatly to be suspected that it is rather some outward restraint that keeps him from it, than the conscience of the sin itself; for if it were that, it would keep him from this also, which is equally a sin, and that truly great in the sight of God, who sees the heart, and loves none that are not pure there.

We must therefore endeavour to withstand the very first motions of a temptation, and make it our daily prayer to God, that he would "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit."

We may also divert such thoughts, at their first presenting themselves to us, by entertaining others in their stead that are religious, or at least innocent and useful. But,

If our great adversary still persists in suggesting them to us, our best defence will be in the remembrance of the commandment of our God, "IT IS WRITTEN," "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" "thou shalt possess thy vessel in

“sanctification and honour;” and also of the great danger we shall incur by transgressing it, viz. no less than that of the second death, “the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, for ever unquenchable.”

But further, the due practice of the various duties of religion, and the impressions of the divine presence, will be of great force and efficacy hereto, to repress in us not only all unbecoming actions, but also such thoughts as a Christian cannot with propriety entertain; for,

If the presence but of a man (like ourselves), or even of a child, be sometimes sufficient to restrain us from an evil action, how much more enforcing must the conviction be of God’s beholding all our actions, “who fills Heaven
“and earth with his presence,” and from whose notice nothing can escape; “who trieth the
“very hearts and reins, and being greater than
“our heart, knoweth all things?”

To these spiritual means and endeavours we must be careful to add also every natural and proper effort.

Let us flee from idleness, which, for the most part, is the parent of lust, and from all intemperance, for this is the fuel of uncleanness; above all things, let us avoid all “filthy
“communications, which corrupt good man-
“ners,” and by which the bent of our inclina-
tions

S E R M O N LXXXIV. 211

tions may be generally known; for vile and debauched expressions are the sure marks of an abject and grovelling mind, and the filthy overflowings of a vicious heart.

Let us remember what our Saviour hath declared respecting the adulterous look, and therefore be particularly heedful that neither our eye nor hand may offend, either of which it would be better to part with, than through them to perish eternally.

But bad company, the bane of chastity, and of every other virtue, as well as all obscene representations, beware of and avoid.

Young persons (let me again repeat) should above all things beware of beginnings, and by no means parly with temptation; their greatest security is in flight, and in the study to avoid all occasions of evil.

To fly from an enemy we cannot resist is the only means to escape a defeat; to play on the brink of a precipice is to sport with danger; and to parley with a lover in the hour of fondness, is to provoke ruin.

The arrogant heart that contemns a foe shall be humbled, but the caution of wisdom will shun the unequal combat.

The pride of honour, the consciousness of virtue, and even the frozen veil of chastity, have been all found insufficient to repel the assaults

faults of love, unassisted by prudence, and unaided by discretion.

If therefore we would be free from sin, we must fly temptation; he that does not endeavour to avoid the one, cannot expect providence to defend him from the other.

If the first sparks of ill are quenched, there can be no flame; for how can he kill, who dares not be angry, or be an adulterer in act, that does not transgress even in desire? But,

If (after all) the flesh should still rebel against the spirit, we must endeavour to reduce it to good order by a temperate diet, or by the several exercises of watchings and fastings, and self-denials.

St. Paul is very frequent and urgent in his advice and exhortations for the avoiding the sin of uncleanness, and all the means and opportunities which lead and betray men into it, such as are "rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness;" he means all kinds of revelling, and the immodest liberties which are taken at them, whereby such "provision is generally made for the flesh as enables it to fulfill the lusts thereof."

As to the reasons and obligations to this duty, they are very powerful and weighty.

Among the privileges of Christianity, none are more valuable or essential to our salvation,
than

than those of our union with our mystical head, Christ Jesus, and the presence and perpetual assistance of that blessed spirit, whereby this union is effected and preserved.

Now this union, and this assistance, are only to be maintained and kept up by purity and holiness: "With the pure only will he shew himself pure;" and only by the inordinacy of our lust is it that we are separated from them.

"He then that hath this hope will purify himself therefore even as God is pure."

Again, The word of God is exceeding express hereto, in the strongest and most general terms, assuring us that "we are called not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness;" advising us to be particularly heedful to cut off all occasions that may betray us from our duty in this point; and, that "the will of God is our sanctification:" they descend in charging us even against the lowest degrees of the opposite vice, purely that we may obtain the highest degree of this lovely virtue. But further,

The advantages of it also are great and considerable, truly great and valuable.

Chastity must needs be a divine quality, since even the enemies of it esteem it, yea, regard those less who yield than those who withstand them: respect waits upon desire, and neglect follows possession. Again,

By

By it men are conquerors of the strongest and most subtle enemy, and have learnt to be deaf to the busiest and most importunate solicitations of a syren, that labours perpetually to ruin them by her treacherous enchantments; by it they secure their native freedom and greatness of spirit.

They preserve their faculties free, and so maintain order and peace within, by subduing all their rebellious passions, and, in their stead, implant every holy and desirable good, and consequently become habitations and fit temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in, who will sanctify and bless them wholly, and finally will fill them with every holy and desirable good; yea, nothing can atone for the want of it: without modesty and innocence beauty is ungraceful, and quality contemptible.

These are the praises, and these the qualities of a truly chaste life; not that which is so with regard to outward circumstances only, but that which is so in the inward disposition, in the choice and purity of the soul, in the wilful and happy ignorance of all evil.

A bright and shining innocence this, which with good care may be preserved in any condition of life, and such as even celibacy itself, with all its affected vows, is but too often destitute.

To

To conclude, Let us each for ourselves do all we can to cultivate so great a duty and virtue as this before us, and as freely discountenance and severely punish the contrary vice in those whom God hath committed to our more particular charge.

Phineas, for executing judgment upon this sort of offenders, both “turned away the wrath
“of God from his people, and it was accounted to him for righteousness (among all posterities) for evermore.”

For the children of innocence and virtue, for the sportive daughters of youth, for the guiltless and inexperienced, whose hearts, warmed with the greatest of all passions, languish for the completion of their wishes, are these rules, and this discourse, given and addressed; and they who conduct themselves carefully by the same (being duly influenced thereby), need not doubt of obtaining, through God’s assistance, the ability to “preserve their
“vessels in sanctification and honour.”

S E R M O N LXXXV.

Against Idleness.

PROV. X. 4. “ *He becometh poor that dealeth with
“ a slack Hand.*”

THE book of Proverbs is a miscellany of sentences, full of various and profound wisdom, both in regard to things civil and sacred; it concerns all kinds of matters, the customs and vices, and humours of men; the duties and business of life; the government and events of providence.

The principal rules and observations concerning these are here set down in plain and pithy sentences; and though some of them may at first glance perhaps seem to be but obvious and flat, yet upon a nearer and more considerate view, they will all of them be found to be as they are stiled, “ruling speeches,” and such as are fit to have an especial authority over men, in the guidance of their affairs.

The

The verse before us concerns that great advantage or prejudice which diligence or idleness are found to have according to our different attachments to them.

The text at present wholly confines me to the consideration of idleness, and the effects thereof: "He becometh poor that dealeth with
"a slack hand."

Though man be born to labour, fitted and designed by the Almighty for some calling and employment, yet there is nothing we are more inclined to than rest and ease.

Idleness, though it be directly contrary to the state of life in which God hath placed us, is so little looked upon as a fault, that men think it their greatest happiness to arrive at such a condition and circumstances in it, as will afford to maintain them inactive; yea, it is a creditable and fashionable vice; the wealthy take it as their due, and most men wish for it, and propose it to themselves, as the end of all their industry and labours.

It is therefore fit that (in this particular, as well as in others) men should be reminded of their duty, and be made to understand that they are bound to labour, not only when necessity obliges them to it, but also by virtue of God's command, who requires it, from a due sense of the many and unspeakable mis-

chiefs and inconveniencies which attend idleness, and of the great advantages accruing from honest industry and labour.

“He becometh poor, that dealeth with a
“slack hand, but the hand of the diligent ma-
“keth rich.”

The former part of these words is what I have selected for the subject of the present discourse—idleness, and the evil effect thereof.

Not only the wise man, but even the great Apostle also (conscious of the evil of idleness, and of the advantage of industry) adds the following, among many other rules of excellent import, “not slothful in business;” so that it is not only a rule of the more wise under the law, but of the more pure and Christian Institution also, to avoid idleness. No one, therefore, performs the duty either of a man, or Christian, who hath no good to shew for the time and abilities afforded him.

The difference of degrees and fortunes in the world do indeed allow, nay they require, different sorts of employment; but no man's life, in any the most exalted state, was ever intended to be wholly idle and inactive, but to be employed according to their office.

And, as in our natural composition there never is, nor can be, an entire rest, so also in our spiritual and politic concern there can be
no

no cessation without real detriment to ourselves and all around us.

Every individual bears some place and station in life, and in the duties of that place and station, is bound by the law of nature, as well as self-interest and command, to exert himself with all fidelity; and every individual hath a soul to save, which requires also attention and proper exercise; to neglect which, for other less important concerns, is to be idle indeed, and tendeth only to penury both of body and soul.

To say then we must not live like drones, upon spoil and prey, and the fruit of other men's labours, is to say no more than the Apostle did, when (directing himself to the Thessalonians) he enjoined, that "if any would not work, neither should he eat."

To say that a man ought not to sustain himself by wicked and vicious practices, is no more than what civil communities generally agree in; but the laws of Christianity say a great deal more. They forbid us to do ill; they forbid us to be idle; they forbid us to be busy about that which in effect is nothing, and squandering our time in that which will not profit, nor turn to good account.

They enjoin us to make a just estimate of our gifts, to remember the author, the dignity and end of them, and not to trifle away means

and opportunities fitted for producing the noblest effects; but in all things to behave ourselves as worthy our characters, as becomes reasonable creatures, and enlightened Christians, which are characters utterly defaced in those that make any sort of wickedness their business, greatly disparaged by those who stoop so low as to lay themselves out upon mean and little designs, never answered except by such callings, and such industry in them as may tend to our own benefit and salvation, and also to the advancement of the public and general good.

To say that we are idle because we have nothing to do, is a very wrong assertion among creatures who can apply themselves to the duties of religion and meditation, who can exercise themselves in the pursuits of knowledge and virtue, and every hour of their lives make themselves wiser and better. Every man hath a soul to save, and if he will look carefully to that, he need not complain for want of business: where there are so many corruptions to mortify, so many inclinations to watch over, so many temptations to resist, the graces of God to improve, and former neglect of all these to lament, surely there can never want sufficient employment; for all these require time, and so men at their deaths find; for those who have lived carelessly, and wasted their time, would then

then give all the world (were they masters thereof) to redeem it.

As to the effects of idleness, they are of most pernicious consequence, whether we consider its influence on the body or mind.

It stupifies the understanding, and weakens and impairs the animal frame; for by exercise are both preserved and improved, and without it the very best constitution and shining genius dwindles even to feebleness, and at last becomes wholly enervated. Industry is not only the instrument, but the foundation of pleasure. Nothing is so opposite to the true enjoyment of life, as the relaxed and feeble state of an indolent mind. He who is a stranger to industry may possess, but he cannot enjoy, for it is labour only which gives the relish to pleasure.

It is the appointed vehicle of every good to man. It is the indispensable condition of our possessing a sound mind in a sound body. Sloth is so inconsistent with both, that it is hard to determine whether it be a greater foe to virtue, or to health and happiness. Inactive as it is in itself, its effects are fatally powerful. Though it appears a slowly flowing stream, yet it undermines all that is stable and flourishing. It not only saps the foundation of every virtue, but pours upon us (on youth especially) a deluge of crimes and evils. It is like water,

which first putrifies by stagnation, and then sends up noxious vapours, and fills the atmosphere with death.

There are innumerable mischiefs and inconveniencies which, in this life, attend upon idleness. Poverty is almost a necessary and never-failing consequent of it; my text is full to this purpose; and it is needless to bring proofs, where our own experience and observation doth so very easily and daily convince us. Add to this, that laziness is attended with ignorance, because learning, as well as the good things of this life, require, both of them, some pains for their acquirement, which it is not in the nature of idleness to undergo.

Another argument wherefore to forego idleness is, that it is destructive of its own end.

The love of ease and pleasure produce idleness, yet such is the nature of things, that idleness produceth neither ease nor pleasure, but the reverse. All men value the conveniencies of life, but the idle person wholly debars himself (unless favoured by an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances) from every means hereto.

All men love respect and reputation, but the idle person is ever contemptible, because he is ever unserviceable and ignorant, an useless burthen of the earth, "salt that hath lost its sa-
"vour,"

“vour,” and therefore “fit for nothing, but
“to be cast out and trodden under foot of
“men.”

All wish to have faithful friends, upon whose good offices they may depend; but the idle person very seldom finds such, and, if he has them, he often loses them, because he hath no amiable qualities which may recommend him to them, and secure their esteem; for it is not to be expected that he who is negligent of his own person and interest should be either observant of, or serviceable to others.

All desire peace at home, and the love of those to whom they are nearly related; but the idle person takes no care of his family, and therefore can expect no affection from them; yea, “The desire of the sluggard killeth him, for he desireth and hath not.” His desires being for the general disappointed, leave him to the vexation of inconsistent affections, and from thence follow dissatisfaction, dislike of his condition, envy and hatred of those who surpass him in good qualities, and are in high esteem; of those whose labours are recompensed with success, and of those who, deservedly or undeservedly, possess the things which he covets.

These are vexations to which idleness continually exposes us; not to mention the decay of bodily health, as well as earthly substance
hereby

hereby occasioned, for idleness is the rust that consumes them both.

But what are the mischiefs which happen either to our bodies or estates, if compared with those evils which it brings upon the soul? It is a sort of lethargy upon the mind, a disease bad enough of itself, but yet is seldom alone, being for the most part accompanied with a train of other vices.

The wise Son of Sirach tells us, that "it teacheth much evil:" and St. Bernard calls it "the mother of all evils." In general,

Whoever is addicted to it in his worldly concerns, will probably be a slothful Christian too; this is by no means an uncharitable supposition; for, the same temper that disposeth to the one, disposeth to the other also; and the same difficulties which deter a man from labouring to live creditably will also discourage him from striving to live religiously.

It is in the nature of idleness to hate to take pains, as it is of goodness to be active; and therefore there is but little hope or reason to think that they should both meet together.

Can the imagination of a man form a stronger idea of life or action, than by comparing it to a race? and how can he hope to finish his course with glory, that presses not forward to obtain the prize? There is not one Christian

virtue to which the vice of idleness is not entirely contrary. Faith, hope, charity, vigilance, and mortification, are all of them inconsistent with it; all those virtues animate and invigorate the mind, whereas idleness enfeebles and fetters it; those principles are pure, strict, and serene, whereas idleness is soft and indulgent; the one raises and exalts the soul, but the other debases and depresses it; and though it has great pretences to innocence and merit, its beginning is in sin, and its end in misery and perdition; stupidity, ignorance, levity, and sensuality, are its companions, and as harmless and simple as it appears, it is, of all vices, the most pernicious and dangerous.

It is in vain for men to excuse and flatter themselves, that in doing nothing, they do no harm, it being (on the contrary) very rightly observed, that they who do nothing are prepared, or are at leisure, to learn and practice all kind of evil; for idleness is the parent of vice. He who hath some honest and innocent end to pursue, and is regular and constant thereat, keeps himself beyond the reach of many temptations; or if perchance they should overtake him, they will have but little or no effect upon him, and that because he is otherwise employed, and hath no time for their amusement. But numberless are the temptations and dangers

gers to which the slothful are exposed, and by which they are continually assaulted. The soul of man is a busy and active thing, and therefore cannot cease from thought, from design or action of one sort or other ; consequently when not directed to that which is good, will grow wicked for want of better employ. When the tempter finds it unoccupied, he will be sure to let slip no occasion for our hurt.

A vacant mind is a suitable habitation for the evil one ; it is the house which “he cometh
“and findeth empty ; then goeth he, and taketh
“with himself seven other spirits more wicked
“than himself, and they enter in and dwell
“there :” and what the state of such a man must then be, is too fearful here to relate.

When such an one reduced to straits, and long unreduced he cannot, in all human probability) be, then follows “what shall I do ? I
“cannot dig ; to beg I am ashamed.” But nature craves, and his wants are importunate ; something he must do, but it must be something that is not laborious, and only requires lying or forswearing, cheating, or the like.

Where idleness is once indulged, the evil one soon possesses himself of such a soil, and is ready to plant all manner of wickedness in it.

Even

Even in a natural way, the garden that is left uncultivated will not only be deficient of flowers, but will speedily be over-run with weeds ;* and the mind unexercised in wisdom and virtue will as naturally abound with noxious vices, perverse appetites, and vexatious humours, which are the thorns and briars, and weeds of the soul.

“ Whilst men slept (as the parable teaches) “ the enemy came and sowed tares.” Then it is that we give our adversary the greatest advantage over us, when the best powers of our soul are, as it were, asleep ; i. e. bound up and stupefied with ease and indolence.

This we learn more particularly from two examples in Holy Scripture ; David is one of them, “ who staid at home in Jerusalem at the “ time when kings go forth to battle,” leaving the conduct of his army (which ought to be his own proper charge) to “ Joab and his servants.” When he thus gave himself up to ease and rest, he was driven to commit two of the greatest sins, adultery and murder ; for which God pronounced that severe sentence against him by the prophet Nathan—“ The “ sword shall never depart from thy house.”

Another instance of this kind is that of Sampson, who was invincible so long as he kept

* “ Neglectis urenda Filix nascitur Agris.”

kept himself employed in that work to which God had assigned him, viz. "warring with the Philistines;" but when his mind was softened with the love of ease and pleasure, he was soon vanquished; insomuch that he, who before was terrible to his enemies even to behold, was afterwards looked upon by them as one who was only fit for sport and pastime. Now,

If David and Sampson, who were both of them so highly favoured by God as to be endowed with extraordinary gifts of his divine spirit, the one with that of prophecy, the other with wonderful personal strength and courage; if such men, whom no dangers nor difficulties, no toils nor labour could ever conquer, were subdued by their own lusts as soon as they indulged themselves in ease and idleness;—if they fell so deeply under God's displeasure for the sins they were then betrayed into, we have the greatest reason to conclude of all slothful persons, that they lie exposed to all manner of wickedness, and that God's severest judgments are reserved for them.

The Devil himself is never idle: St. Peter tells us, that "he goeth about continually, (like a roaring lion) seeking whom he may devour." And ought not we to be as watchful and diligent to save ourselves, as he is to destroy us? Delays and inattention are dangerous.

ous. As in worldly affairs the sluggard, who loses the early means of improvement and advantage, frequently wholly loses them, and is left to bemoan in poverty his infamous sloth; just so in the affairs of the soul, death may come amidst our tardy and procrastinating purposes, and the power and opportunity to return be for ever denied us.

There needs no other proof of the heinousness of this sin, than the terrible judgments which God inflicted upon Sodom for it.

The prophet Ezekiel reckons it amongst the grievous provocations which brought down fire from Heaven upon it. "Behold (says he) this was the iniquity of Sodom," pride, fullness of bread, "and an abundance of idleness was in her."

The dreadful overthrow which befel them ought to be a warning to every man, more especially to beware of such sins as are declared to have been the causes of it.

Christians have reason to expect much greater judgments, if they give themselves up to the same vices. As they hereby wilfully transgress the command of God, and frustrate the designs of providence, they will hereafter be more strictly called to account for the time they have mis-spent, and the talents they have wasted, and will have their portion with the unprofit-

able servant "in outer darkness, where there
"will be weeping and wailing, and gnashing
"of teeth."

Let us fly then from idleness, as the certain
parent both of guilt and of ruin; youth in par-
ticular are to be strongly cautioned against it.

If the rust and canker (the general effects of
inactivity and idleness) are suffered to benumb
their tender limbs, what agility or exertion
whatever are we to expect in their more ad-
vanced years, when they shall themselves in-
crease with the increasing habit? According
to their stations therefore, and their abilities,
let them (as much as may be) be exercised in
an honest calling, or some innocent amuse-
ment or exercise, either of body or mind; for
idleness is the bane both of the natural as well
as intellectual faculties; and under idleness I
include not mere inaction only, but also all that
circle of trifling occupations, in which too
many saunter away their days, perpetually en-
gaged in frivolous society, or public amuse-
ments, in the labours of dress, or the ostenta-
tion of their persons. Redeeming the time then
from such dangerous waste, let us seek to fill it
up with employments which we shall hereafter
be able to review with satisfaction. The years
which now pass over our heads leave per-
manent memorials behind them; from our
thoughtless

thoughtless minds they may escape, but they remain in the remembrance of God. They form an important part of the register of our life, and they will hereafter bear testimony either for or against us at that day, when for all our actions we must give an account to God.

Such are the fruits of idleness. It is attended with all the mischiefs we can suffer in this life, and, in the life to come, (unless we reform from the evil habits thereof) eternal destruction will be its sure reward.

To conclude. "Sloth is the mother of ignorance," is an argument of a degenerate and mean mind, which is content to grovel in a despicable state, and aims at nothing that is great; it disposes a man to live precariously and ungratefully on the public stock, as a burthen to the earth, and an insignificant cypher among men; yea, "an idle person is a kind of monster in the creation, for all nature is busy about him.

"Idleness is the parent of want, but the labour of virtue bringeth forth pleasure.

"The slothful man is a burthen to himself, his hours hang heavy upon him, he loitereth about, and knoweth not what to do.

"His days pass away like the shadow of a cloud, and he leaveth behind him no mark for remembrance.

“ His body is diseased for want of exercise ;
“ he wisheth for exercise, but hath not the power
“ to move ; his mind is in darkness, his
“ thoughts are confused ; he longeth for know-
“ ledge, but hath no application.

“ His house is in disorder, his servants are
“ wasteful and riotous, and he runneth on to-
“ wards ruin ; he seeth it with his eyes, he
“ heareth it with his ears, he shaketh his head
“ and wisheth, but hath no resolution, till ruin
“ cometh upon him like a whirlwind, and shame
“ and repentance descend with him to the
“ grave.”

S E R M O N LXXXVI.

Of Industry, in Opposition to Idleness.

PROV. X. 4. "*But the Hand of the Diligent
maketh rich.*"

THE wisdom of Solomon is in nothing more clearly seen, than in that retort of expression which is so observable throughout the whole almost of these his compositions; for hereby, whenever he exposes any single vice, he immediately backs it with its opposite virtue, thereby at the same time both reclaiming from evil, and exhorting to the practice of every duty. The verse before us is no more confirming this observation, than are innumerable others in this divine production; and it would be needless to recite passages in proof, when the inspection of the least considerate beholder must convince him therein.

Poverty (the effect of indolence, as riches are of diligence) hath generally so great an ef-

fect upon the conduct of mankind, that it might be presumed scarce any arguments were wanted to dissuade men from the one, and excite them to the other, after these things were but once barely mentioned to them.

Poverty (declared by the wise man to be the effect of idleness) is a state of life attended with so many visible and great inconveniencies, that there is no evil in the world, the idea whereof ordinarily strikes the mind with more terrible apprehensions.

Sin, which is a moral evil, and in that respect indeed more to be dreaded than the natural evil of poverty, or all the miserable effects of it put together, is yet what men do but too often chuse to commit in order to avoid it; and, as to riches, what can be compared unto it? grace and glory being but too often light in the balance when weighed against it.

Here then, as worldly-minded men, we have the greatest of all arguments to induce us hereto: "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." Nor indeed is this an argument only of positive injunction under the letter, but of the more pure and Christian institution also. St. Paul found it expedient on many accounts to recommend industry in their worldly callings to the first Christians, by precept frequently,

quently, yea, and more than once, by his own example also.

“ You yourselves (says he) know that these
“ these hands have ministered to my necessities,
“ and to them that were with me;” yea, “ I
“ have shewed you all things, how that so la-
“ bouring ye ought to support the weak, as ye
“ have us for an example.”

Such a person might boldly and earnestly
press the observance of a duty which himself
had so remarkably fulfilled.

Diligence, industry, and proper improve-
ment of time, are material duties, especially of
the young; for, to no purpose are they endow-
ed with the best abilities, if they want activity
for exerting them; unavailing in this case will
be every direction that can be given them, ei-
ther for their temporal or spiritual welfare. If,
dead to the calls of nature at that age, they al-
ready languish in slothful inaction, what will
be able to quicken the more sluggish current of
advancing years? It is not the affluence of
fortune, or any elevation of rank, that exempts
us from the duties of application and industry.
Industry is the law of our being, it is the de-
mand of nature, of reason, and of God.

It is not only the instrument of improve-
ment, but the foundation of pleasure. It is the
indispensible condition of our possessing a sound
mind

mind in a sound body ; it is the appointed vehicle of every good to man.

In my further treating on the duty before us, I shall enforce it under this two-fold distinction, viz.

First, As it respects our worldly callings ; and,

Secondly, Our religious concerns. Care and industry are the only proper subordinate means (under the blessing of God) of attaining success in our temporal affairs.

Labour was, by God's own appointment, the employment of our first parent in a state of innocence, and before his expulsion from paradise ; much more necessary then must "the sweat of their faces" be to his descendants, in the present state of things.

Industry therefore, and diligence, is in itself so far from being inconsistent with our duty, that it really makes a part of it ; yea, we allow a great deal to care, industry, and labour ; it is the channel by which the blessings of providence are ordinarily conveyed to us.

If we hope therefore to acquire what is necessary for our subsistence, and to preserve it when we have it, to provide for those who depend upon us, and to avoid gross and scandalous ignorance, labour of the body, or of the mind, or of both, must be undergone. I shall

bring

not

not endeavour to prove the truth of this assertion, it is generally known and acknowledged, and few, very few, if any, have denied it.

Industry in our worldly callings is necessary, because it is impossible to neglect it, and at the same time to be obedient servants of God.

Naked came we into this world, and destitute of all things which support and preserve life; naked also as to our minds, which, at first, are a mere blank, and have no knowledge; but the soul and the body are made and designed by their creator, the one to improve in understanding, and the other to increase in strength, and to be employed by the soul in such manner as may best conduce to the welfare of both.

Thus God, by the voice of nature, teacheth, that he designed us to be improveable and industrious beings.

To these deductions of reason the Scriptures agree in many places; they tell us that God put the first man into the garden of Eden to cultivate and dress it; afterwards, upon his transgression, it was told him that his work should be increased, and that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread all the days of his life,

“Great travel is created for every man (says
“the author of Ecclesiasticks), and a heavy
“yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the
“day

“day they go out of their mother’s womb, till
 “the day they return to the mother of all
 “things.”

This is very true ; and yet so many advantages arise both to the body and mind from labour, that it may be questioned whether the toil which God enjoined to Adam after his fall, and to his posterity, was a punishment or a favour.

Certain it is, that labour, if it was brought into the world by transgression, is one of the best preservatives against it ; if it was the child of sin, it is certainly (when all due requisites concur) the parent of virtue. Again,

God (who hath made us incapable of subsisting by ourselves, but obliged to our fellow-creatures, in part, for the things which we possess) teaches us, by the voice of reason, that we also, in return, ought to promote the welfare of others.

Before we came to years of discretion, we contracted a debt of gratitude to those who have educated us, and to the nation to which we belong ; we cannot therefore refuse to discharge it without great injustice, nor at any time properly discharge it, without industry and diligence in our several callings and stations.

The Gospel strictly commands us to do good, to assist, to instruct, to direct, and relieve,

lieve, all which require labour and attention ; whatever therefore is or may be reasonably expected from us ; whatever are the duties which our education and endowments, or manner of life have fitted us for, or confined us to, the industrious discharge of these is a service done to God, an obedience due to our common head, a care owing to ourselves, and to those who have immediate dependance upon us ; an instance not merely of charity, but even of strict justice to our brethren, who being "one with us," have a right to demand, and are defrauded, and really injured, when they do not actually reap some advantage by us.

These reflections may suffice (I hope) to make us sensible both that we ought to be employed, and after what manner it becomes us to be so.

It is necessary here (to obviate all objection hereto) to observe, that notwithstanding the many strong arguments by which industry is here maintained and supported, it is not meant that we should be always upon exercise ; some avocations and innocent amusement are necessary for the relaxing of the body, and refitting it again for fresh employment, that it may retain its force and virtue for a longer duration.

Idle bystanders may perhaps judge the lives of the industrious really most wretched, but they

they are oftentimes most contented and happy, and pleased with their condition.

In truth, a man is just as miserable as he thinks himself; and, if he delights in industry, industry is then to him a pleasure, and idleness a toil. As to the advantages of industry and diligence, they are many and great.

We are hereby freed from many and perplexing vexations, as not having time either to admit or harbour them. It hath a tendency to preserve health and serenity; it repays us with something that is grateful and useful; in all prudent labour, either of the hands or the head, some acquisition is to be made.

“In all labour (saith Solomon) there is profit,” and “the hand of the diligent maketh rich;” yea, “he that tilleth his ground shall be satisfied with bread.”

Again: By industry we maintain ourselves, and are not burthensome to others; we get skill and dexterity, and experience, and so learn to do our work with less toil and trouble; we improve our understandings, and find out truths which more than reward the pains of seeking them.

By industry we gain credit and reputation, and whatsoever our state or condition be, we cannot be contemptible; there is no work despicable because it is mean; if it be honest and necessary,

necessary, it is honourable; yea, we are rendered important to the creation by serving its necessities.

“Seest thou a diligent man in business, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean persons.” Again,

Diligence will always carry us forward, and cause that we advance in all improvements.

Industrious wisdom often prevents what lazy folly thinks inevitable; the wise and active conquer difficulties, by daring to attempt them, whereas sloth and folly shiver and sink at the toil and hazard, and even make the impossibility they fear.

Yea, industry argues an ingenuous, great, and generous disposition of soul, by unweariedly pursuing things in the fairest light, and disdaining to enjoy the fruit of other men's labours, without deserving it.

In a word, as he who lies under the dominion of vice must expect the common effects of it, so he who practices virtue, and is particularly industrious therein, cannot fail of experiencing every good and happy effect.

And, as it is thus useful, honourable, and happy in itself, and to the possessor, so it is most advantageous to others, spreading a glorious influence to all around him, putting sloth daily to shame, and animating others to his own activity,

tivity, increasing the public good, as well as his own private interest.

Industry, great and persevering, is absolutely necessary to secure any valuable or distinguished improvement: superficial qualifications, whether of body or mind, may, and are indeed, often obtained at an easy price of time and labour; but superficial qualifications confer neither honour, emolument, or satisfaction.

A person may be introduced to the best of temporal things, and may be led to expect from such advantages extraordinary advancement; but these things are all extraneous, and of themselves add nothing to the real worth of any man; nay, without industry, i. e. application therein, how often have the greatest figures dwindled down even to inconsiderate and contemptible cyphers.

Thus much concerning industry in our worldly callings; let us now, therefore,

Secondly, Consider it in that other acceptance given, as respecting our religious affairs, and working out our own salvation, to which we have the most pressing motives.

The shortness and uncertainty of life warns us not to neglect it; for, since upon our present behaviour depends our future state, it behoves us to lose no time, but to set about our duty instantly, "to day, whilst it is called
"to day."

The

The reward also which is set before us excites us to it: we think it reasonable to “labour even for the meat that perisheth;” much more should we endeavour for “that which endureth unto life eternal,” and exert our utmost care and diligence that we may secure to ourselves the unchangeable favour of God, and the happiness of eternity.

These and many more are the motives which we have to religious industry, and every Christian will certainly allow them to have sufficient weight and force, and acknowledge that eternal life is desirable, and that it is an indispensable duty to serve God.

To conclude, It is in spiritual things as it is in temporal, “God will be found only of them that seek him.”

Thus, as diligence hath a natural tendency to promote the end desired, so it is the most secure and happy guard against all snares and temptations whatever; and, where all requisites concur, is a very proper disposition and instrument for every virtue.

But, what need I more, or why should I dwell further on the great advantages of the duty before us, since these are evident to the least reflection? and therefore, not only as a moral virtue, but as a religious grace, do we encourage and promote it.

It is observable, that God hath often called men to places of the highest dignity and honour, when they have been busy in the honest employment of their vocation. Saul was seeking his father's asses, and David keeping his father's sheep, when called to the kingdom. The shepherds were feeding their flocks, when they had their glorious revelation. God called four Apostles from their fishery, and Matthew from the receipt of custom; Amos from among the herdsmen of Jekoa, Moses from keeping Jethro's sheep, and Gideon from the threshing floor, &c.

God never encourages idleness, and despiseth not persons in the meanest employments.

Indeed, in general, worldly diligence needs to be but little urged among us, we being, for the most part, sufficiently active in the prosecution of our temporal concerns: but let not our practice in these things condemn us in our regard for the better things of another life; let us not be slothful and negligent respecting them, whilst we strain every sinew, and exert every effort to obtain the transitory blessings of this world.

Commendable as industry is, yet if it hath only the things present in view, it loses much of its applause, as well as many, and the most considerable of its benefits.

Learn

Learn we therefore from worldly diligence and application the necessity and advantages of spiritual industry, and how much more abundantly it is our duty to labour to gain the favour of God, through Christ, than to obtain the meat that perisheth, that so our souls may be filled with true and real fatness, and be enriched with every holy and desirable good.

To conclude: "The hand of diligence defeateth want; prosperity and success are the industrious man's attendants.

"Who is he that hath acquired wealth, that hath risen to power, that hath clothed himself with honour, that is spoken of in the city with praise, and that standeth before the King in his counsel? Even he that hath shut out idleness from his house, and hath said to sloth, Thou art mine enemy."

"He riseth up early, and lieth down late; he exerciseth his mind with contemplation, and his body with action, and thereby preserveth the health of both.

"If thy soul therefore thirsteth for honour, if thine ear hath any pleasure in the voice of praise, raise thyself from the dust whereof thou art made, and exalt thy aim to something that is praise-worthy.

"The oak that now spreadeth its branches towards the Heavens, was once but an acorn in the bowels of the earth.

“ Endeavour therefore to be first in thy calling, whatever it be, neither let any one go before thee in well-doing ; nevertheless, do not envy the merits of another, but improve thine own talents.

“ Scorn also to depress thy competitor by any dishonest or unworthy method ; strive to raise thyself above him only by excelling him ; so shall thy contest for superiority be crowned with honour, if not with success.

“ By a virtuous emulation the spirit of a man is exalted within him : he riseth like the palm tree in spite of oppression ; and, as an eagle in the firmament of Heaven, he soareth aloft, and fixeth his eye upon the glories of the sun.

“ The examples of eminent men are in his visions by night, and his delight is to follow them all the day long.

“ He formeth great designs, and rejoiceth in the execution thereof, and his name goeth forth to the ends of the world.”

S E R M O N LXXXVII.

Worldly-Mindedness, the Sin and
Evil of it.

COLOSS. iii. 2. *“Set not your Affections on Things
“on the Earth.”*

THESE words, being a prohibition of the
sinful love of the world, I shall endeavour to shew what love of the world the Apostle
doth here forbid, and briefly enforce the same.

That all love of the world, and the things
therein, is not sinful, may be plainly gathered;
for these are the workmanship of God, and his
power, wisdom, and goodness, are stamped upon
them, being all of them “very good.”

All things therefore are to be looked upon
not with hatred and contempt, but with love
and esteem. The principle of seeking our own
continuance and well-being, as well with re-
spect to the body as the soul, flows from the
very essence of our nature, and is what was im-
pressed

pressed upon us by God himself at our first creation, and therefore to act in conformity to it is not only innocent, but is our duty so to do, and to act contrary to it, if we are capable of so doing, includes a violation of one of the prime and fundamental laws of the creation. There is a necessary attention then to the management of our worldly business, which is so far from deserving censure, that it is a very commendable and useful quality, a duty which we owe to ourselves in particular, and to the families to which we severally belong.

There are some things that are, in a peculiar manner, good and beneficial to us, and such are the means that are necessary to sustain our bodies; and it is as reasonable to love them as it is to love life and health itself. They are the sinews and strength, and support of kingdoms, and upon this account it is as reasonable to love them as to love our preservation and safety, which is the prevailing principle of nature; but there is one thing which, above all, makes it reasonable to have some love and esteem for the things here before us, viz. because they are the necessary means for the performing many duties which God hath commanded, and which, in a peculiar manner, tend to his glory, and to our salvation.

By

By "the riches of this world" we are enabled to be "rich in good works," and thereby (as the Apostle says) "lay up for ourselves" "a good foundation for the time to come," "whereby we may lay hold on eternal life."

Whilst men live in this world, it is not expected that they should live wholly above it. There is an allowable, a commendable, yea, a necessary care for the affairs of this life, which he that neglects to take, complies not with the order of providence, nor acts agreeably to the situation in which God hath placed him. And

Since, upon these accounts, some love of the world is lawful and commendable, it is necessary that we endeavour to distinguish rightly between things, and shew distinctly what love of the world is sinful, the which the Apostle here prohibits, and is to be carefully avoided.

This we shall shew briefly, by considering the End, the Degree, and Effects hereof; and,

First, Let us consider the end of our love of earthly things.

If we love the world and its enjoyments not for any lawful end, but for the support of our pride, and the gratifying of our carnal lust, our worldly love is then sinful, and is such as is here prohibited.

This therefore is always to be regarded, and excellent to this purpose is that saying of the Apostle;

Apostle ; " Many (says he) ask and receive
 " not, because they ask amiss, that they may
 " consume it on their lusts ;" or, when it is
 hoarded up to no advantage, but to the hurt of
 the owners thereof.

But further, the sinful love of the world
 (which the Apostle here condemns) may be
 known by the degree of it.

The world, and the things that are therein,
 are to be loved, but in a degree suitable to their
 nature, as things worldly, earthly, temporal.

Whatever some may imagine, the things
 here below, the comforts and conveniencies of
 life, are not to be rejected ; we are not to se-
 quester ourselves from the world, but to " use
 " it, as not abusing it."

The command of the Apostle, to " set our
 " affections on things above, and not on things
 " on the earth," doth not prohibit all affection
 for earthly things, but only an immoderate, in-
 ordinate love of them : our chief desire is to
 be after heavenly things, and our affection for
 earthly things is not to be equal hereto, much
 less to exceed it.

We are not to be more solicitous for our mo-
 mentary continuance, than for our future and
 eternal welfare ; but having done our part, we
 are to leave the rest to God, and to trust in
 him at all times, for all things.

All

S E R M O N LXXXVII. [251

All things here below are but vanities, when compared to things that are divine; so that when we love earthly things above their worth, when the degree of our affection to them comes too near to the love we ought to have for heavenly things, it is then a sinful love, and is that which is here condemned: when we begin (according to the Apostle's expression) to love the world, and "the things that are therein;" to "mind earthly things, and to set our affections "on things on the earth," then we may conclude that we are worldly-minded.

Our concern for this earth manifestly interferes with our preparation for Heaven, and we have contracted "a friendship here which is "enmity with God."

But further, A too great attachment to the things on the earth may be easily discovered by the effects it produceth. Its usual and common effect is to make us neglect God, and our duty to him; and there cannot be a clearer proof of it than this, when men are so devoted to the world, that they allow no time for spiritual employments, and when the exercises of religion are irksome to them.

But, is this the dignity of our nature, and the excellency of our religion, to be so given up to a slavish love of this world, as to have no serious thoughts and preparation for another,

ther, pursuing the pleasures and profits of this world as if we were capable only of sensual enjoyments, "like to the beasts that perish."

A sinful love of the world, and a too great attachment thereto, may be further discovered in its making men effect wicked means for the attaining any thing therein; this is truly evident; and no less culpable are they who riot in luxury and excess; for this (though it hath the appearance of a contempt of the world) is yet but the scene only changed, for a sinful love of pleasure rules the one, as worldly gain the other.

The want of compassion on the necessities of others, is also another effect of a too great attachment to the world.

When want and misery rather move our scorn than pity, this shews that we are to blame herein, for not only grace, but also humanity itself, is extinguished by it.

But further, Another effect of the fruit of a sinful love of the world, is discontent with our condition, and an envying the superior state of others; and this for the want of having "our affections on the things above," which would make us well pleased, at least contented, with our own provision; yea, and even think ourselves rich and noble in the grace and favour
of

of God, how low soever our condition be in this world.

Whenever therefore we repine at our estate, and nothing will please us but the height of prosperity, these are plain symptoms that the soul is sick with love, and sinful attachment to the world.

Men's impatience and immoderate grief for accidents and losses proceed from the same evil cause; for, were our hearts free from the world, and were (as they ought to be) fixed upon spiritual objects, we should equally "bless God when he takes away, as well as "when he gives."

I have done but little more than name these things, purely that I might have time, by a few considerations, to enforce what hath been thus laid down.

And here, were the things of this world of eternal duration, of sure acquirement, and lasting satisfaction, we might then well be allowed the liberty of "setting our affections on them;" but as they are the reverse, "thou art therefore "inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, "that adjudget" these things to thee.

The things of this world are uncertain, both in prospect and possession.

A great number of those who imagine to themselves great acquirements do not, after all their labour, succeed in them.

Though their designs be never so well laid, and they proceed in the execution of them with all the dexterity and address imaginable, yet one unforeseen accident or other frequently starts up in the way, and utterly defeats both him and his expectations; but, should he be so fortunate as to gain his end, yet how vain and uncertain are all things about him, they “vanish like a shadow,” and are no more; neither of themselves can they add any real worth to any man.

Could we be in safe and actual possession of all our hearts can desire in this world, yet it is impossible (in the nature of the thing) that we should find any perfect satisfaction from them.

Even the best of men, whose enjoyments are regular, and who have, for that reason, the best relish and enjoyment of them, yet find little more in them than to make their lives tolerably easy.

What is there in a round of follies wherein to glory? It is but a repetition of the same pleasures, only with less and less enjoyment. Solomon, who enjoyed the utmost of his heart's desire in this respect, yet pronounced them to be all “vanity,” yea, and what is worse, in the end, vexation of spirit.” But,

Should riches escape the common fate of “things on the earth—should they adhere to

us,

us, and seek not another for their owner, nor prove to us as wormwood in the possession, yet (which should further disengage our affection) they are at best and longest but temporary, of short continuance; neither they nor we shall continue here for ever; yea, “our days here are but as a shadow, and we have no continuance.”

These reasons are sufficient to shew us the folly of an inordinate affection for the things on the earth: but this is not all; not only folly, but wickedness also, is ascribed hereto.

An affection and fondness for this world is indeed, in the nature of things, irreconcilable with a proper regard for the next; for, our care and attention can no more admit of two supreme objects, than our adoration.

“No man can serve two masters;” “ye cannot serve God and mammon;” for, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

“Take heed then to yourselves, that your hearts be not overcharged with a too much fondness for the things of this life, and so that day (the great day of accounts) come upon you unawares.”

Let us here (for our furtherance herein) carry our imaginations forward, to that great period, when this earth, with all that it doth

inherit, shall be dissolved. Let us therefore imagine the man, whose affections had been wholly set upon this world, to appear before the awful tribunal, crying Lord! Lord! And what more favourable answer can mercy itself be supposed to make him than this? “Son, remember that thou, in thy life time, receivedst thy good things; thine they were by option and choice, as well as by possession; had the Heaven thou now cravest been accounted thy treasure then, thy heart would of course have been there also.

“But, as for thee, thy heart was but for thy covetousness, thy godliness was gain;” yea, “didst not thou agree, in effect, with me, for the things of that earth, which is past and gone?” “Wherefore I do thee no wrong, for verily thou hast already had thy reward; take that thine is, and go thy way.”

God is jealous of his honour, and will not admit of any rival in our affections.

He therefore that loveth the creature more than the Creator, must expect to feel a vengeance worthy of incensed omnipotence, whilst Angels and Saints (applauding the just judgement of God) shall say “Lo this is the man that took not God for his portion, but trusted in the multitude of his riches,” and in the perishing things of this world.

Such

Such will finally be the doom of every one that "layeth up treasure for himself, and is not "rich towards God;" yea, who "departs "from the living God, to trust in uncertain "riches."

Nothing can be more unbecoming Christians, whose whole religion pretends to be built upon the firm belief of another world, than to be intent upon the things of this present life, to the neglect of their souls, and all eternity.

"Love not the world then, neither the "things that are in the world; for, if any "man love the world, the love of the Father is "not in him; for all that is in the world, the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the "pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of "the world, and the world passeth away, and "the lusts thereof; but he that doth the will "of God, abideth for ever."

"Let us cease therefore from the things that "are before us, for wherein are they to be ac- "counted of, since they all perish with the "using?" Let us cease from, and "so pass "through things temporal, that we finally lose "not the things eternal."

S E R M O N LXXXVIII.

Of Heavenly-Mindedness, in Opposition
to the preceding.

COLOSS. iii. 2. *“Set your Affections on Things
“above.”*

HAVING already endeavoured to disengage your affections from the perishing things of this world, it may be reasonably expected that I should direct you where to place them, and to this purpose excellent is the advice before us, “Set your affections on things above.”

That the things on the earth, the possessions and pleasures of this present world, are objects utterly incapable of satisfying the soul of man, hath always been a truth constantly received and affirmed, being truly obvious to all men.

Thus far, therefore, many of the philosophers easily might, and did go, in their discoveries; but then, after they had withdrawn the eyes of their disciples “from the things
“on

“on the earth,” they were at a loss for any thing substantial where to place them. “The “things above” was a phrase with which the heathen morality was little acquainted, and to “set the affections upon them” might, at the first promulgation of the Gospel, be justly called “a new commandment.”

A commandment however of that importance, that upon the observance or neglect of it, men’s moral characters will always principally depend.

“The man of the earth will favour of the “things that are therein ;” but with the heavenly-minded, we shall “seek the things that “are above,” “that the man of the earth may “be no more exalted.”

A reward, inestimable in its value, and endless in its duration (being the object of our affections) will keep the mind that contemplates it “steadfast and immovable” in the way to obtain it.

In my speaking further to these words, I shall chiefly apply myself to the matter they contain, and explain the same, with what enforcement can be deduced.

First, By “the things above” we are to understand the things of another world, “the joys “of Heaven, and the pleasures at God’s right “hand for evermore ;” for so the Apostle himself

self explains the phrase in the immediately foregoing verse. What he there calls "seeking the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," he here expresseth by "setting our affections on them."

The duty we are considering then, can imply no less than a firm belief of the reality of such a state of happiness to good men; a lively sense of its moment and importance; and an earnest desire and hearty endeavour, above all things, to prepare and qualify ourselves for it.

First, That it is necessary, in order to our "setting our affections on things above," that we should be persuaded of the reality of their existence, is too plain to need here any enlargement: But,

It is material to observe, that the persuasion must not be an idle, notional belief only of a future state; no—but such as is quick and powerful, and discovers itself on all proper occasions, in our lives and conversations.

This, and this only, is "that faith, which overcometh this world," and which is necessary to our regularly "setting our affections on the things above." Accordingly,

The heavenly-minded man will disengage his attention as much as possible from the affairs of this life, that he may with the greater ease, freedom, and alacrity, "press forward toward

“ward the mark and high prize of his calling;” he will make religion the governing principle and chief business of his life, and such as is, in comparison of all others, “the only one thing needful.”

Less than this will hardly come up to the proper import of heavenly-mindedness.

But, if we thus set our affections on things above, we may humbly hope, through the merits of our Redeemer, that we shall finally be blest with the full fruition of them.

“Set then your affections on things above,
“and not on things on the earth, for where
“your treasure is, there will your heart be
“also.”

Under the Jewish œconomy indeed great indulgence was permitted to the animal inclinations and worldly affections of men, and in compliance thereto, it is observable, that the greatest incitements wherewith God stirred them up to the observance of their religion, were the promises of temporal blessings and rewards.

But we are now under a more pure and spiritual dispensation; and, as our Saviour Christ hath raised us to higher hopes, and proposed nobler rewards to our obedience, even the immortal bliss and glory of another life, so our aspirings after them should be answerable: we must

must endeavour, as much as we can, to free ourselves from all inordinate love of the creature, and dispossess ourselves of all earthly-mindedness, that we may be rich towards God, yea, "rich in good works," and be "filled with the fulness of him, that fills all in all."

Our blessed Saviour told his disciples (and in them all true professors of the same faith) that "they were not of the world, but that he "had called them out of the world," i. e. that the profession of the Gospel required that they should not any longer conform themselves to the sinful customs and practices of the world, nor live as the rest of mankind, immersed in sensual and worldly delights, as if they had no higher expectations; but that having their minds fixed upon those glorious hopes of their calling, they should act agreeably thereto; and our blessed Saviour himself was conformable to this doctrine, while he was invested with our nature; for,

Though he had the sovereignty of the world at his command, and could have engrossed all the riches, pleasures, and delights therein, and been "greater than Solomon in all his glory," and exceeded even the carnal expectation of the Jews; yet we find that he was wholly unaffected with these things, and voluntarily declined them, and took upon him the form of a
 "servant,"

“servant,” and (as the Prophet had foretold in that mournful description of him) “he had
 “no form nor comeliness, that we should ei-
 “ther desire or admire him;” hereby teaching
 us that the pleasures, which result from the en-
 joyment of the good things of this world, are
 not to be placed in the rank of true felicities,
 nor the want of them to be accounted a real
 evil, and therefore that we ought to endeavour
 to bring our minds to such an indifference to-
 wards them, that neither the allurements of
 prosperity, nor the hardships of adversity,
 should divert us from the steady performance of
 our duty, but that we being (in the spiritual
 part of our nature) from Heaven, should always
 regard the end for which we were made, and
 have it in principal esteem, and “set our
 “affections on things above.”

Let us then frequently transfer our thoughts
 from the present momentary scene of things,
 and in our contemplation “lay hold on the
 “hope of the enduring substance which is set
 “before us.”

It is the presence of sensible and temporary
 good things, which gives them all that advan-
 tage they appear to have over such as are spi-
 ritual and eternal.

We are fond of those, because we are always
 conversant with them; but we have no relish
 for

for these, because we allow ourselves to be perfect strangers to them.

The former offer themselves to our view daily, in their full magnitude of persuasion; whilst the latter, on account of their supposed distance, are either wholly overlooked by us, or seen under great disadvantages.

But meditation, under the direction of faith, will supply all these defects, and correct every error of our sight; for it gives a kind of presence to those objects, which are yet only in futurity, and "calls the things which, as yet, are not, as tho' they were." It places things temporal, and things eternal, on the same level, and at the same distance from us; by this means enabling us to view them in their just proportions, and to take a more exact estimate of their comparative worth, and pretensions to our regard.

The consequence of which must be, that this world, in its best estate, will appear unworthy of any great concern, from a being who hath an object so much more valuable before him, and "will have no glory," scarce any place in his thoughts, "by reason of that glory which so infinitely excelleth."

We may indeed safely desire a comfortable subsistence in this world, and use all honest endeavours

endeavours to procure it, and that because God hath made it a certain appendage to our duty.

“Our heavenly Father knoweth that we “have need of” food and raiment, and other conveniencies of life; and if we “first,” i. e. principally and above all things, “seek the “kingdom of God and his righteousness,” they will be added unto us;” for, “godliness “hath the promise of the life that now is, “as well as that which is to come.”

But that which God hath primarily and principally promised as the reward of an holy life, is the blessedness of our future state, in the enjoyment of him hereafter; and all the good things of this life are but subservient means and assistances to the attainments of it; our affections therefore ought to be but equal to their nature and value.

Our first and most intense desires must be after the eternal happiness of our souls in another life; and our desires and enjoyment of the good things of this world must be cool and moderate, in respect to our great and principal end.

“Set then your affections on things above, “and earnestly seek them.” Let the diligence of our search bear some proportion to the dignity and excellency of the glorious object before us.

Our very natures require this from us; it is an immortal spirit which God hath given us.

As therefore our mind, i. e. our soul, is eternal, no temporal thing can be a fit object for it. As to our better part, we are created immaterial and immortal. As we know not what powers belong to superior spirits, nor to what heights and dignities they are exalted, we cannot therefore presume to give a description of them; but, as God hath formed man after his own image from above, "made him but a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour," may it not be allowable to magnify and extol human nature?

Such a resemblance, such an alliance, demands our peculiar attention, our highest regard and affection.

Though one part of us be only "dust and ashes," yet the other partakes of an heavenly original, and claims kindred with the angels.

Have they immaterial and incorruptible natures? so have we.—Have they intelligence, reason, and liberty? so have we.—Are they qualified to worship the Creator, to admire his works, and enjoy him for ever? so are we.

Being then endued with such powers, and blessed with such prospects, we should raise and exalt our ideas accordingly, suitable to the dignity

dignity of our natures ; we should maintain a deep sense of, and affection for the things above, which so nearly and properly concern us, and so demean ourselves in all things as becomes us, and may fit and qualify us for the honour and happiness designed us ; yea, may we (being from Heaven heavenly) always regard the end for which we were made. The prize of our high calling by God in Christ Jesus is such as will abundantly recompense all our pains, and fully answer all the affection we can set upon it ; a prize for which we may all be competitors, and yet our pretensions interfere not with one another : “ Let us so run then, that we “ may obtain it.”

“ The things above,” and of another world, are not of that light nature and import as are things here before us. If therefore we strain every sinew, and exert every nerve and possible means to acquire perishing things, how strenuous should we be to obtain those which “ endure unto everlasting life.”

Hope of reward is in other cases the great spring of industry, and the support of the patience and resolution of men ; and, is it not truly strange, that when the rewards of Heaven are set before us, we should not (more generally than we do) proportion our care, di-

ligence, and attention, to the greatness, and certainty of so noble a reward?

May we all then, with united endeavours, press forward towards the mark for it, "lay-
"ing aside every weight," in order to run with success the great race that is set before us. The reward promised is "a crown incorruptible," "a glory that fadeth not away, reserved in
"Heaven for us;" and though we all run, yet we may each of us obtain it.

If we have therefore any regard to ourselves, or for our eternal happiness,—if we hope to see God, and be partakers of his glory, let us instantly break off every cord of vanity, that so easily entangles us, and "set our affections on
"things above."

Let us live as those who have another and better world in view, and are thirsting and longing after those more valuable and durable delights, which are prepared for us in the kingdom of our father, so shall we be "meet par-
"takers of the inheritance of the saints in
"light, an inheritance incorruptible, unde-
"filed, and that fadeth not away, reserved in
"Heaven for us."

S E R M O N LXXXIX.

The Evil of inordinate Pleasure.

II. TIM. iii. 4. *“Lovers of Pleasure more than
“Lovers of God.”*

THE wise and gracious ruler of the world hath created us to obey him, and from that obedience to receive our proper share of happiness. He hath adapted a variety of satisfactions to the various parts of our frame, and taught us by nature, but more distinctly by his word, the due subordination of each, and the circumstances in which we may, or may not lawfully partake of them.

To dispute the goodness of pleasure therefore, as God designed it, would be to deny experiment, and contradict sensation, which is the highest evidence a man can have of the things of this world; nay, even a good man is content with hard usage at present, that he may take pleasure in the world to come; and

though now remote from him, the thoughts of enjoying it, in due time, make him bear up against all difficulties.

It is an error to condemn pleasures as pleasures, and not as they are unjust and unlawful; let them be never so innocent, the excess is criminal, and not only brings disgrace, but dissatisfaction, and hurts the constitution no less than the credit.

To speak therefore against pleasures in general, and wholly, may be thought too severe, and what the present age will not perhaps well relish, or be altogether just and reasonable; because it is very possible that they might be so framed and governed, as not only to be innocently diverting, but instructing and useful; but as the general excess now is, they are intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in a civilized nation, much less if we add to this the light which Christianity affords us, forbidding these things, as they so abundantly minister to infidelity and vice, corrupt our manners, and lessen the awe and reverence which all men ought to have of God and religion.

Beware therefore, above all things, of inordinate pleasures, and abstain thyself from them, for they enervate the soul; and, as to "revellings, let them not once be named
"among you, as becometh saints;" for,

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The greatest temptation to flesh and blood are sensual pleasures; the very presence and opportunity of these are apt to kindle the desires, and to enflame the lusts of men, especially where they meet with suitable tempers, where every spark that falls kindles.

Besides, youth is extremely addicted to pleasure, because it is most capable, as well as most sensible of it; and where we are most apt to be transported, there we are most apt to transgress.

Nothing doth so besot the mind, and extinguish in it all sense of divine things, as sensual pleasures: if we fall in love with them, they will take off our thoughts from religion, and steal our hearts from God, for we cannot serve both; and "the carnal mind is enmity against him."

Besides, we hereby waste that time, which we ought in an especial manner to study how to redeem. If we do but reflect upon what great work we have here to do, "the making of our calling and election sure;" i. e. the securing of our title to Heaven, and happiness hereafter, and withal how uncertain we are what time will be allowed us for that purpose, it will appear that our time is that which, of all other things, we ought most industriously to improve, and therefore surely have little need to contrive ways to waste it, since it flies
of

off so fast of itself, and is withal so impossible to be recovered.

Let those, therefore, who spend their days in idle pastimes and pleasures consider this, and withal what time they spend to better purposes, and whether this also might not be more profitably employed, and what account they will one day be able to give of it.

Youth ought particularly to be guarded against an inordinacy herein. Though amusements may be allowed as a relaxation, yet they are most culpable, if made the sole business of the young; for they then become the gulph of time, and the poison of the mind; they foment bad passions, they weaken the manly powers, they sink the native vigour of youth into contemptible effeminacy, and destroy all that is good and commendable in us. But the life of those who "love pleasure more than God," is fuller of guilt in proportion as it gives others a more public invitation to live in the same evil way.

If the rich and great proclaim that vain amusements, with idleness and excess, are their passion, and that religion is their contempt, as it will provoke the better part of their inferiors to think ill of them (which is indeed no very desirable thing), so it will incline the larger part, without thinking at all well of them,

them, to imitate their example; for, if they may behave so, the conclusion will be boldly drawn, that every one else may.

Thus are our morals destroyed, and sin becomes triumphant: but this is not the behaviour of a rational creature, of a penitent for sin, or candidate for eternal felicity.

There can arise from it no "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light," no susceptibility of spiritual happiness, or hope of escaping future damnation.

Not only a few of our detached hours, but our whole being is God's, and therefore to be employed as he approves. Our lawful daily business, nay our needful relaxations from it, we may humbly present to him, as part of what he designed us for; but can we think of offering up nothing but a series of vain and idle dissipations, or worse?

Our baptismal vow promised other things for us; the Holy Scriptures have prescribed us a very different conduct; have told us that "we cannot serve two masters;" that "they who live in pleasure are dead whilst they live;" that he who delighted himself splendidly every day, at last took this for his portion, to "lift up his eyes in torments."

A too great affection and fondness for the pleasures of this life is indeed, in the nature of things,

things, irreconcilable with a proper regard for the next; for our fondness and attention can no more admit of two supreme objects, than our adoration.

The Apostle St. John comprehended the most general sins of mankind, under this three-fold distinction, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life."

They are sinners before God, who walk in "the lusts of the flesh", i. e. in riot and sensuality, in surfeiting and drunkenness, "having eyes full of adultery."

They are sinners before God, who (in the words of the prophet) "covet an evil covetousness," giving into "the lust of the eye," "saying unto gold thou art my hope, and unto the fine gold thou art my confidence."

They also (in the case before us) are sinners before Heaven, who are wholly taken up with "the pride of life," "who are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God," having their hearts attached to pomp and pageantry, shew and ostentation, and so entirely devoting their time to recreations, sports and amusements, as if it was the chief end of man, as if (like Leviathan) they were sent into the world "wholly to take their pastime therein."

Take

S E R M O N LXXXIX. 275

Take heed therefore to yourselves, "that
"your hearts be not too much set on these
"things, and so that day (the great day of ac-
"counts) come upon you unawares."

It appears then that an inordinate love of pleasures is irreconcilable with a due regard and proper affection to God.

Let us therefore possess our souls with a just sense of their vanity, and esteem them accordingly, and so frequently transfer our thoughts from such fading objects, and in our contemplation "lay hold of the enduring substance
"that is set before us."

Besides what hath been already said, there are other considerations to be added hereto, such as the shortness and vanity of them, the ill effects they will produce even in this life, and the double aggravated misery they will most certainly occasion hereafter.

No sensual pleasures are of long or lasting continuance, and their effects are of most pernicious consequences.

Pleasures unduly taken enervate the soul, make fools of the wise, and cowards of the brave; yea, a libertine life is not a life of liberty.

The least that may be apprehended from inordinate pleasure is, that it unbends the mind too much; that it indisposes us for serious and
sober

sober reflection; that it creates an aversion to pains and labour; and if it be repeated too often, impresses on our minds such a quick sense of pleasure, as we shall not be able readily to master.

Yet this is not what I have principally in view at present; I am to caution men against the more direct and immediate consequences of an ill conduct in this particular, against the follies of an unguarded joy, and the sins which are too often the consequences of them.

How often is it seen that men, in these looser hours, throw off the restraints of decency and modesty, indulge themselves in vast liberties both of speech and action, affront their friends, and provoke their enemies; say what they are ashamed to remember, and act what will not, what cannot be forgotten! All this arises from hence, that they think wisdom and prudence have nothing to do in the case, but that diversion necessarily carries with it a licence to all folly.

The persons most liable to err in this respect are the giddy and unexperienced youth, those who know little, and fear less; and who, meaning no ill to themselves, are therefore inapprehensive of consequences; too much diversion to such is a very dangerous thing, and they should be taught early either to avoid it as
much

much as possible, or else to enjoy it with great reserve and moderation. To say the truth, most of the corruptions which have appeared, to the disgrace and ruin of many, have been owing originally to a want of caution in this particular: it is this which makes ill company so very hazardous.

Persons of modest and virtuous dispositions, by thinking themselves at liberty to abate somewhat of their reserve in the hours of pastime, are gradually lost.

Their minds (now open to bad impressions) lose the horror they once had of vice; they are tainted before they are aware, and at length are led to the grossest instances of wickedness; but

However this should prove, yet still, unless men behave with a deal of prudence and caution, there are numberless wrong things into which an attachment to inordinate pleasure may betray them; things either improper, or perhaps criminal, or highly prejudicial to virtue and religion.

From parties of pleasure (even in the most unexceptionable light) what profit can we gain? It is necessary for all who attend such, that they divest themselves of whatever is likely to contradict the intention of their mirth, or be inconsistent with it; and to this purpose all their cares, their serious thoughts, and moral

reflections, must all be discarded, and they must appear only in the disposition of gaiety.

In this state, and among enlivened mirth, how mechanically do the thoughts and spirits rise! How soon and insensibly do they get above the first bounds, which their cooler hours had marked out!

In the common scenes of dissipation, can the most cautious say, "Thus far shall my desires go, and no further?" or, will the coolest and most circumspect say (when pleasure hath taken full possession of their hearts), that no thought nor purpose shall arise there, either of sin or future sorrow?

In these loose and unguarded moments, the imagination is not always at command: in spite of reason and reflection, it will sometimes forcibly carry them whither they would not.

Considering then the hazards we run, and how little we can gain by the venture, how much wiser and better should we be, if we would seek occasions rather to improve our little stock of virtue, than incautiously expose it to so unequal a chance, where the best we can hope is to return as we were; but, where probably we may be so unfortunate as to lose it all, be lost ourselves, and undone for ever. Pain and anxiety, guilt, grief, and late repentance, if any, and oftentimes death and ruin,
are

are its malign attendants, not to mention the defect of provision for families which is hereby omitted through expences of jollity, and just dues neglected, and too often unjust arts of raising gain practised, whereby still to support them: but the worst consideration of all is the effect they will produce hereafter.

If inordinate pleasures are not foregone in this life, and repented of, they will greatly aggravate our future misery.

As nothing commends pleasure more, or gives happiness a quicker taste and relish than precedent sufferings and pain; so, on the other hand, nothing will exasperate sufferings more, or set a keener edge upon misery, than to step into afflictions and pain, immediately out of a state of pleasure.

This, we find in the parable, was the great aggravation of the rich man's torment; he had first received his good things, and was afterwards tormented.

We should do well therefore to consider, that these pleasures of sin, which have here so much temptation in them, will, one day, be one of the sorest aggravations of our torment.

It is therefore the greatest folly imaginable for any man to purchase the fleeting pleasures of sin at the dear rate of double aggravated eternal misery.

When the idea of any pleasure strikes our imagination, let us make a just computation between the sense of the pleasure and that of the repentance sure to follow it; between the pleasure itself, and its sure effects.

Possibly so many cautions against fondness for pleasure may seem to leave those who regard them in a very mournful condition, but indeed they are only plain and practical hints for that discipline of our temper and conduct, which is necessary for our true happiness here, as well as our eternal felicity hereafter.

A moderate use of pleasures is what is allowed; but from the too general corruption of it, and the extremes to which they are carried, we should learn this instruction, viz. to have the most watchful care of ourselves even in the enjoyment of those diversions which are in themselves innocent and laudable. Christian piety allows us (under proper and reasonable regulations) every enjoyment of sense, every delight of elegant taste, every exertion of social cheerfulness, and forbids nothing but mischief, misery, and madness.

The contemplation of the Divine Being, and the exercise of virtue, are in their own nature so far from excluding all gladness of heart (as some falsely imagine), that they are the perpetual sources of it. The true spirit of religion

ligion cheers as well as composes the soul; it banishes indeed all levity of behaviour, all vicious and dissolute mirth, but in exchange fills the mind with a perpetual serenity, uninterrupted cheerfulness, and an habitual inclination to please others, as well as be pleased itself.

Religion is so far from debarring men any innocent pleasure, or comfort of human life, that it purifies the pleasures of it, and renders them more lasting, grateful, and generous; and, besides this, it brings mighty pleasures of its own, those of a glorious hope, a serene mind, a calm and undisturbed conscience, which do far outshine the most refined earthly pleasures.

“ It is a great disgrace to religion to imagine that it is an enemy to mirth and cheerfulness, and a severe exacter of pensive looks and solemn faces;” it is not the business of virtue to extirpate the affections of the mind, but rightly to rule and regulate them.

God hath formed us for pleasing intercourse, and put mirth in our hearts, with intent that we should exert it.

The sprightly disposition of youth calls for gladsome activity; the fatigues of business, the infirmities of old age, the wearisomeness of ill health, and low spirits, often require the best relief that cheerfulness can administer; and not to allow that our Maker considers “whereof

“we are made,” would be giving an idea of religion both unamiable and false; but then, just how far each of us may carry our indulgence, cannot be minutely pointed out.

These hints, however, may be of service hereto, as,

First, That our pleasures be lawful, and have nothing of sin in them.

That they be used with moderation; that we be not too earnest in them, nor in our hearts become “more lovers of them than of “God,” but use them only in their proper degree for refreshment. But,

Considering the thin partition between virtue and vice, and how easy, yea, and almost imperceptible the transition is from the one to the other, it is our highest wisdom to be rather upon the reserve, than approach too near the confines of licentiousness; and the more steadily we apply ourselves hereto, the more proper part we shall act in life, and shall be the furthest and most free from danger and sin; and when we come to our final abode, every capacity of spiritual enjoyment, to which we have improved ourselves here, will be inconceivably augmented, and completely filled, and “we shall be abundantly satisfied with the delights of God’s house, and shall drink of the rivers of his pleasure for evermore.”

SERMON

S E R M O N . X C .

Immoderate Sorrow, Dejection, and Reservedness, the opposite Extreme of inordinate Pleasure.

PSAL. xlii. 5. *“Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?”*

TO mourn without measure is folly; not to mourn at all is insensibility; the best temper is between piety and reason; to be sensible, but neither to be transported nor cast down.

Faults have generally their extremes; as we have therefore dissuaded from an ordinate love of pleasure, so also would we from an immoderate dejection of spirits: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?” “Trust still in God.”

We may observe from the natural order of the context, the particular causes of the Psalmist's affliction; they were “the bitter reproaches

“proaches of his enemies:” “His bones were
 “even smitten asunder as with a sword:” yea,
 “all the waves and storms of God had gone
 “over him.” So that there was no affliction
 whatever but what he had experienced, and
 yet, under all of them, with what patience and
 resignation doth he submit to the will of God
 in all things, and trust in him for succour at
 all times!

“Why (says he again in the conclusion)
 “why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why
 “art thou so disquieted within me? O, put
 “thy trust in God, for I will yet thank him,
 “which is the help of my countenance, and
 “my God.”

Notwithstanding all these his afflictions,
 there were yet reasons strong and sufficient to
 support him under them, yea, and even to
 make him to “rejoice with thanksgiving.”

So that what I design is to see what argu-
 ments and consideration can be advanced,
 whereby to dissuade from so perilous an evil;
 for, “by sorrow of heart (as saith the wise
 “man) the spirit is broken.” Indeed, if we
 take sin into the account, it is necessary here
 previously to admonish, that we cannot too
 greatly grieve for the commission of it.

Even the Psalmist himself is as great a pat-
 tern of contrition for sin, as he is of fortitude
 in the case of affliction before us.

“All

“ All my sins (says he) have gone over my head, are like a fore burthen, too heavy for me to bear ;” yea, “ he went mourning all the day long,” and he “ roared for the very disquiet of his heart ;” for, “ against thee only (says he) have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.”

When our sins and offences are the cause of our disquiet, we do well indeed to lament, and our grief should rise in proportion to the greatness and number of our offences ; though even here we should be cautious not to raise our disquiet to so great a degree as those who despair, or so as to render ourselves unfit for the necessary exercise of repentance and amendment, which, as it will again, through Christ, heal all our infirmities, will again animate us to all chearfulness in obedience, as knowing that though we “ were once dead in trespasses and sins, yet are we again renewed hereby, and quickened to newness of life.”

“ Godly sorrow worketh repentance, not to be repented of.”

This being premised, I shall proceed as was proposed.

And here, many and great are the considerations preventing immoderate grief, “ because it betrays want of faith in the promises of the Gospel, which offers remedies for every evil ;

“evil; and want of faith in the providence of
 “God, who rules the world with unerring
 “wisdom and goodness.”

Because we may be good, and do our duty
 in every condition.

Because we may make an advantage of, and
 turn to good every thing that befalls us.

Because trouble and anxiety do not ease, but
 make every sad accident a double evil.

Because what we judge an evil may be sent
 and meant to occasion and produce in us the
 greatest good: and,

Lastly, Because evil is natural to our pre-
 sent mortal state, and therefore to be expected.

Great and noble are the rewards promised in
 the Scriptures to the patient enduring of af-
 fliction. We are there promised to be abun-
 dantly recompensed hereafter; that “our
 “light affliction, which endureth but for (as
 “it were) a moment, shall work for us a far
 “more exceeding and an eternal weight of
 “glory.”

Yea, “blessed are ye when ye endure temp-
 “tation, that in the time of recompense ye
 “may receive a greater reward:” and, if after
 these and the like promises, we yet sink under
 affliction, our faith surely must be but small.

Yea, what cause of sorrow hath he, or rea-
 son to droop under affliction, whose very af-
 flictions

afflictions themselves do thus work for his good, whose God is his trust, and salvation his eternal reward? Instead of sorrow in this case, he hath reason of triumph, and to "rejoice ever-
"more."

Patience, contentedness, and resignation are, in the Gospel, made the offices and ornaments of religion; little therefore must be our obedience also, if we are negligent herein, and give way to an over-grief. The melancholy Christian therefore justly forfeits his claim hereto, as being a disgrace to his profession, which is so "full of joy and immortality," as to set us above every thing that is mortal. "This (saith the Apostle) is the victory that
"overcometh the world;" i. e. those troubles and difficulties wherewith God is pleased to exercise good men in this world, even "our
"faith."

He that believes not in a God at the helm of affairs, to guide and conduct them, may well be allowed the liberty of an over-grief, when accidents befall him, as he hath here no prospect of any good arising out of all his troubles, nor in the end any benefit from a patient resignation under them; as being without a God is therefore "without any hope in the world;" whereas he who hath faith in a providence,
"hath therefore every thing requisite to life
"and

“and godliness,” as being possessed of him who is so, and who will assuredly confer it upon those who trust in him, and such ways and measures as, in his wisdom, shall seem best for us. God, though our own reason cannot “by searching find them out,” may yet have secret reserves of a good providence towards us, some unthought-of reward treasured up for us, working even good out of the evil before us.

But this will more properly fall under another head of these our general considerations, which we shall in its due place urge in the case before us. Therefore further,

Immoderate sorrow is also unreasonable, because we may be good in every condition, and in whatever befalls us.

To be contented in an abundance, and thankful for an overflow of goodness vouchsafed us, is but according to the dictates of nature; yea, and to weep for passed favours, and for present pressing evils, betrays only a weak and carnal mind;” But,

To “rejoice evermore,” and to bear up with a mind above affliction, even in affliction itself, is an heroic virtue, and is therefore more to be regarded and rewarded; for we hereby shew the mastery of our disposition over nature, and that we are far advanced in godliness and grace:

we

we may be good in every state, and there are proper offices in every condition of life.

The more arduous are our trials, the more acceptable will our faith and obedience be, as being more exemplary, if we act conformably to our duty therein.

But further, immoderate sorrow is also unreasonable, because we may make an advantage of, and turn to good every thing that here befalls us.

Good and ill are the tests by which we are to know the truth of our faith and constancy, nor is there any thing else that can tell us the powers of our own soul. "We know (saith the Apostle) that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Every thing is to be considered so far proper or prejudicial to us, as it tends to promote or obstruct our principal end.

Upon this view, pain, poverty, and disgrace, things in themselves naturally evil, yet have a moral use and expediency in them, as they may prove the occasion of exercising our virtues, and renewing our measures.

This is the argument whereby the Apostle encouraged and persuaded the Romans to bear the sufferings and persecutions to which they were exposed, with a constancy and force of mind superior to them; and to give the greater

weight and confirmation thereto, he speaks it not as a matter of doubt or probable conjecture, but as a most assured and evident truth. “We know (says he) that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

I might instance several proofs hereof, as that our virtue is hereby tried, and our repentance furthered and promoted; our pride humbled, and God’s fatherly care of us, in correcting us, proved; our affections are hereby weaned from the world, and are consequently directed to a better.

These, and others of like godly import, afflictions naturally produce, when rightly improved; so far therefore should we be from giving way to immoderate sorrow on their account, that we should look upon them, when exercised therewith, as so many occasions to the practice of goodness.

But further, by trouble and anxiety we make every sad accident a double evil. All our other passions are to some end; love, to enjoy; anger, to redress; fear, to avoid; and the like.

But the passion of grief serves to no purpose whatever; because it is in no respect good; it is therefore utterly absurd and unreasonable.

The

The evil of affliction is generally enough of itself, and we need not aggravate it by our self torment.

The many temporal evils which affliction produceth, should (one would think) be sufficient to keep us from giving way thereto.

No man knows, when he once abandons himself to melancholy, and gives way to grief, how it may overwhelm his spirit, and sink it past recovery. "The trouble of the world" (saith St. Paul) worketh death:" and Solomon, "By heaviness of heart the spirit is "broken."

As the oak falleth before the tempest, and raiseth not again, so boweth the heart of man to the force of sadness, and returneth unto its strength no more.

As the snow melteth upon the mountains from the rain that trickleth down their sides, even so is beauty washed from off the cheeks by tears, and neither the one nor the other restoreth itself again for ever.

Be not deceived, therefore, with fair pretences; nor suppose that sorrow healeth misfortune; it is a poison under the colour of a remedy; while it pretendeth to draw the arrow from the breast, lo! it plungeth it only the deeper.

C c 2

Again,

Again, another reason wherefore we should forego immoderate sorrow is, because what we judge an evil may be sent to promote our greatest good.

This we can only ascribe to the unerring wisdom of God, who seeing the connections of all things, and their various effects, is pleased to order the scheme of his providence accordingly. It is not every disposition that is suited for every state, perhaps our temper may be such as to require some wholesome check or restraint occasionally, or else even the things themselves may be such as are in no way suited for us; yea, and how often doth it happen that those very things which here gave us the most melancholy and disconsolate apprehensions, by one unforeseen accident or other, have turned at last to our greatest advantage, and consequently were sent and meant to us for good.

At least (as hath been already hinted) if we should take occasion hereby to renew our measures in repentance and amendment, we shall at last have no cause to complain. But,

Lastly, We should be further induced to abstain herefrom, because evil is natural to our present mortal state, and therefore is to be expected.

Perils

Perils and misfortune, want, pain, and injury, are more or less the certain lot of every man that cometh into the world. "Man is "born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." God created all things liable to change, and dare we then to weep at their changing?

If we know the law of nature, wherefore do we complain of it?

It behoveth us therefore early to fortify our minds with courage and patience, that we may support, with a becoming resolution, our allotted portion of human evil.

God hath given us no good without its admixture of evil; but he hath given us the means of throwing off the evil from it.

As joy is not without its alloy of pain, so neither is sorrow without its portion of pleasure. Joy and grief, though unlike, are united; our own choice only can give them to us entire.

The best things in the hands of a fool may be turned to his destruction, and out of the worst the wise will find the means of good; yea, the wise man maketh every thing the means of advantage, and with the same countenance beholdeth he all the faces of fortune; he governeth the good, he conquereth the evil, and is unmoved in all; for "nothing is

“foreign to us;” “nothing can happen to us
“beyond what is natural and common to man-
“kind;” and if such is the confession of the
unenlightened, with what degree of resignation
should we submit to natural causes and their
effects, who, besides the law of nature, have a
written testimony to confirm us herein, and to
bear us up under them, yea, and examples con-
firming the same.

With what degree of resignation did the
primitive martyrs endure affliction, and the
spoiling of all their goods? “none of these
“things moved them,” as knowing that they
had a better inheritance reserved in Heaven
for them.

It is certain then upon the whole matter,
that in every condition good men have much
more cause of comfort and joy than of dejection
and trouble. Let our fears be as great,
and our present sufferings as heavy as they can,
yet there are considerations sufficient to balance
the account, such as will infinitely outweigh
them, and even make them light.

The consideration of our immortal duration
in a future state, and of the endless and un-
speakable happiness of another world, are of
that solidity and weight, that “these light af-
“flictions (as the Apostle calls them) which
“are

“are but for a moment, are not worthy to be
“compared to them.” In a word,

The misery and happiness of the whole life of mortals are themes scarce worth a passion. Whatever we endure as an evil, or possess as a good, are both so short, that as the one doth not deserve an excess of joy, so neither does the other need to sink us to an excess of grief.

In all our fears and troubles then, in all the afflictions and adversities that may happen to us in this world, let us “encourage ourselves
“in the Lord our God, the Father of Mercy,
“and God of all consolation,” always remembering that both we and all our concerns are under his immediate inspection, and under the care of his providence, where we are infinitely safer than in any counsel or wisdom of our own: If (after all) it be the will of God to exercise any of us with more than common and ordinary trials, let us (as St. Peter exhorts)
“commit the keeping of our souls to him in
“well doing, as to a faithful Creator, who is
“able to keep that which is committed to him,
“and to preserve us to his heavenly kingdom.”

But, as it is the case sometimes of the afflicted, not to be able to apply these and the like consolations to themselves, by reason of the dejection of their spirits through grief, it is the duty of every brother therefore to endea-

your

vour the mitigation of the afflictions of another ; and this we are to do,

First, by sympathizing with them, and sharing their griefs, and condoling their sorrows, or (as the Apostle expresses it) by “weeping “with those that weep.”

This, upon the first eruption of violent sorrow, is the most proper remedy that we can administer, for when a passion is in its rage and fury, then reason and discourse are mere cyphers, for it turns a “deaf ear to the charmer, charm he ever so wisely ;” whereas, to be pitied and condoled, is a real ease and comfort to the miserable ; and, as we ought to sympathize with them in their sorrows, so, when they are capable it, we are obliged likewise (by the laws of Christian charity) to use our best endeavours to support and comfort them under their heaviness ; sometimes by lessening and alleviating their afflictions ; sometimes by applying to them the consolations of religion ; sometimes by representing to them the evil of immoderate sorrow ; sometimes by diverting them with innocent mirth and pleasantries—from all which sorrow generally disqualifies us.

To cheer and to comfort the afflicted is both a great and necessary act of mercy ; as, on the contrary, causelessly to afflict and grieve another, to add weight to his sorrows, and worm-

wood

wood to his gall, is not only inhuman, but diabolical.

To conclude: The design of this discourse is not, with the stoicks, to set us above nature, and the sensibility of affliction, but only to moderate ourselves under it.

The office of reason is not to root out, but to regulate the passions and affections; not to destroy their being, but to restrain their excess, and to direct and govern them, both as to the object and degree.

Sorrow and sympathy are as natural to the human mind, as cold, and hunger, and thirst, are to the body; and to prevent them belongs neither to the province nor power of reason. In this respect the mind is merely passive; this internal sense is a thing quite distinct from reason, and hath no connection with it; it depends not upon argument and choice, but is derived from nature, and acts and is acted upon, by necessity.

“It is not in thy nature to meet the arrows
“of ill fortune unhurt, nor doth reason re-
“quire it of thee: It is thy duty to bear mis-
“fortune like a man, but thou must also feel
“it like one.

“Tears may drop from thine eyes, though
“virtue falleth not from thine heart: be care-
“ful

“ful only that there is cause, and that they
“flow not too abundantly.”

“Let not thy mirth then be so extravagant
“as to intoxicate thy mind, nor thy sorrow so
“heavy as to depress thy heart. This world
“affordeth no good so transporting, nor in-
“flicteth any evil so severe, as should raise thee
“far above, or sink thee much beneath the ba-
“lance of moderation.

“We have these things in a figure trans-
“ferred to us,” which for its aptness to the
present and foregoing discourse, I shall here in
part recite.

“Lo ! yonder standeth the house of joy ; it
“is painted on the outside, and looketh gay ;
“thou mayest know it from the continual noise
“of mirth and exultation that issueth from it.

“But enter not thou into it, neither asso-
“ciate thyself with those who are frequent
“therein.

“They call themselves the sons of joy, but
“madness and folly are in all their doings.

“They are linked with mischief hand in
“hand, and their steps lead down to evil ;
“dangers beset them round about, and the pit
“of destruction yawneth beneath their feet.

“Look now on the other side, and behold,
“in that vale, overshadowed with trees, and
“hid

“hid from the sight of men, the habitation of
“sorrow.

“ Her bosom heaveth with sighs, her mouth
“ is filled with lamentation, she delighteth to
“ dwell on the subject of human misery.

“ She looketh on the common accidents of
“ life, and weepeth ; the weakness and wick-
“ edness of man is the constant theme of her
“ lips.

“ All nature to her teemeth with evil, every
“ object she seeth is tinged with the gloom of
“ her own mind, and the voice of complaint
“ saddeneth her dwelling day and night.

“ Come not near her cell; her breath is con-
tagious; she will blast the fruits, and wither
the flowers that adorn and sweeten the gar-
den of life.

“ In avoiding the house of joy, let not thy
“ feet betray thee to the borders of the dismal
“ mansion, but pursue with care the middle
“ path, which shall lead thee by a gentle as-
“ cent to the bower of tranquility.

“ With her dwelleth peace ; with her dwel-
 “ leth safety and contentment ; she is chear-
 “ ful, but not gay ; she is serious, but not
 “ grave ; she vieweth the joys and sorrows of
 “ life with an equal and steady eye.

“ From hence, as from an eminence, thou
“ shalt behold the folly and the misery of those,
who,

“ who, led by the gaiety of their hearts, take
“ up their abode with the companions of jol-
“ lity and riotous mirth, or infected by gloomi-
“ ness and melancholy, spend all their days in
“ complaining of the woes and calamities of
“ human life.

“ Thou shalt view them both with pity, and
“ the error of their ways shall keep thy feet
“ from straying.”

Upon the whole, “ The soul of the chearful
“ forceth a smile upon the face of affliction,
“ but the despondence of the sad deadeneth
“ even the brightness of joy.”

“ What is the source of sadness but a fee-
“ bleness of the soul? Rouse thyself to the com-
“ bat, and she quitteth the field before thee.”

“ She is an enemy to thy race, therefore
“ drive her from thy heart; she poisoneth the
“ sweets of thy life, therefore suffer her not
“ to enter thy dwelling.”

“ If thou wouldst avoid what is base, if thou
“ wouldst disdain what is cowardly, if thou
“ wouldst drive from thy heart what is unjust,
“ suffer not sadness to lay hold upon it.”

“ Ask men if their sadness maketh things
“ the better, and themselves will confess it is
“ folly; nay, they will praise him who beareth
“ his ills with patience, and who maketh head
“ against misfortune with courage: Applause
“ should be followed by imitation.”

“ Behold

“ Behold sadness, see how she droopeth her
“ head, like the flower whose root is cut asunder.”

“ Is there in her mouth discourse? Is there
“ in her heart the love of society? Is there in
“ her soul reason? Ask her the cause and she
“ knoweth it not; enquire the occasion, and
“ behold there is none.”

“ Hast thou understanding, and seest thou
“ not this? Hast thou piety, and perceivest
“ thou not thine error?

“ Subject not thyself therefore to ills, where
“ there are in return no advantages; neither
“ sacrifice thou the means of good unto that
“ which is in itself an evil.”

S E R M O N X C I .

The Sin of prophaning the Sabbath and Sanctuary of God.

LEVIT. xxvi. 2. “*Ye shall keep my Sabbaths,
“and reverence my Sanctuary, I am the Lord.”*”

GOD having by Moses cautioned the Jews, in a former verse, against idolatry, gives them here in charge two important rules, in reference to his own worship.

The first respects the stated times of it, “ye shall keep my sabbaths.”

The second, the place appointed to it, “and reverence my sanctuary.”

The reason to enforce these two rules of divine-worship, and the caution against idolatry, are both subjoined in the following words: “I am the Lord;” (i. e.) I who have alone a right to be worshipped, and who will not give my glory to another, command you to observe
in

in the most devout and solemn manner, such times and places as are more immediately consecrated and set apart for my worship and service.

I shall speak to each of these apart; and,
 • First, “Ye shall keep my sabbaths.”

In renumerating the duties which we owe to God, we must not, by any means, omit the sanctification of the Sabbath, with which the due discharge of religious worship is immediately connected; nay, with the observation or neglect of which religion itself must either stand or fall.

As soon as God had created the world, and man in it, he blessed the seventh day, upon which he rested from creation, and sanctified it, i. e. he distinguished it from the other six days, by setting it apart to the purposes of religion. Thus the sanctification of the sabbath is the first and oldest of God's institutions, and must have a real foundation in the nature of man, and an immediate connexion with our being, and the great and excellent ends of it. The sabbath and man were, in a manner, created together. This is an indication, that although the particular time is, as it must necessarily be, of positive appointment, yet the thing itself is an article of natural religion, and stands upon the reason of things. The great end for

which we are brought into life, is to attain the knowledge, and to be confirmed in the love and obedience of God ; which includes all right action and virtue, all that is perfective of our nature, all that renders us happy in ourselves, and a blessing to others ; and all that can qualify us for the enjoyment of God, and fit us for immortal honour and glory. We cannot keep a due and prevailing sense of these things upon our minds, without close and repeated application of thought ; and therefore, as the affairs and necessities of this present life make such constant and importunate demands upon us, that our hearts and thoughts would be unavoidably ingrossed by them, it is in the nature of things necessary, that some certain time should be publicly appropriated to the exercises of religion, instruction, prayer, and praise, to fortify our minds against temptations, and to season them with piety and virtue. And, doubtless, God alone hath wisdom and authority sufficient to assign that portion of time which is proper and generally competent for those good purposes.

If we pursued the practice of our duty to our Maker, so far as gratitude would oblige us, from a due consideration of his benefits towards us, in creating, preserving, and redeeming us, all our time, and all the powers both of our
souls

souls and bodies would be wholly taken up in his praise and worship; we should think it but
 “meet, right, and our bounden duty, at all
 “times, and in all places, to give thanks to
 “him.”

But God, to whom all this is most justly due, hath rather thought fit to appoint the time, and place of his worship, than leave them at large to be determined by us.

Not that we are hereby excused from our more private devotion, which is left to our own prudence and discretion, but “God hath sanctified the seventh day, which is the sabbath,” for his worship and service, and hath established it by an express commandment. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

The primary notion of the sabbath then is a rest or cessation from the ordinary business of life. The design of it is to preserve true religion, which would never have been lost in the world, had the sabbath been duly observed from the first institution of it. And therefore we find in Scripture, both under the old and new dispensations, it was applied to the purposes of religion; not that we are to be wholly intent or too scrupulously exact herein,—no, our blessed Saviour hath given us the true notion of our duty in it: “The sabbath (says he) was made for man, and not man for the sab-

“bath.” God intended it for our good, and we should therefore be careful so to employ it, as may best promote our true interest and happiness; for this good purpose we are to rest from our ordinary business, and to avoid whatever may dissipate our minds, or indispose our hearts from the heavenly work of this day.

Christ himself hath taught us so to understand this, as not to mix any thing superstitious with the observation of it, nor to conceive of it as such a scrupulous rest, that we may not do any thing fit and reasonable, and which otherwise is a duty. Works of necessity and mercy he expressly allows. We are not to embarrass or distress ourselves in this life, nor neglect any opportunity of doing good. But,

As the concerns of our souls are of infinitely greater moment to us than those of this life, it should (on this day) be our chief care therefore to provide for them; yet not so as to forget, that, whilst we are in the body, necessary provision must at all times be made for it; and to help and assist the needy must at no time be neglected, when it is in our power to do it.

But all the time we can spare upon that day from works of this nature ought to be diligently employed by us in the heavenly exercises of God's true religion and service. It is enough that God allows us six days of the week

week to labour in for the meat that perisheth; and, if it is a shame to be idle and slothful in these, how careful should we be not to mispend "the seventh, which is the sabbath," and which is peculiarly set apart for providing that "meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

We read in the Scriptures how grievously God complains of the Israelites, of their neglect herein; he produceth this as one of their most provoking sins: "They have prophaned" (says he) and polluted my sabbaths."

As we have therefore one day in the week appointed for a religious rest, we ought to answer the ends of it, and to make it a day of rest from our ordinary labours, for our better attending upon the solemn worship of God, and employing ourselves in the exercise of all things which pertain to spiritual life and godliness. But,

There are two sorts of men who would be thought of the number of God's people, who are grossly guilty of the breach of the duty here enjoined us; the one transgresses it to serve their secular interests, and the other to indulge their ease, and gratify their vices and pleasures.

The first of these do in no sense make it a day of rest; but whatever business they have to do, though it be a matter merely of profit, and

and not of necessity, they think it clear gains to take from the sabbath to this worldly purpose. But this argues very little sense of religion, or a great distrust of God's providence.

It may generally be observed, that they who are so greedy of gain as to encroach even upon the sabbath for it, do seldom meet with the success which they proposed to themselves by it. God oftentimes blasts such proceedings with the breath of his displeasure; whereas others, who are duly conscientious in the discharge of their duty, and are willing to "give to God the things which are God's," who "call the sabbath a delight, and honourable, not doing their own business," but in honouring their Maker, are blessed by him with a double portion of increase.

It is certainly reasonable in the nature of the thing, that the day which Almighty God has more especially required us to serve him in, should be appropriated to his service; but yet, in particular cases, (as we have before observed) where necessity, or any extraordinary accident requires that we should apply ourselves to some more servile employ; here "God will have mercy, and not sacrifice."

There was under the Jewish dispensation itself, as well as by the express determination of our Lord in the Gospel, an equitable allowance granted to such cases.

What

What I would caution against is, the pretending in such cases to justify any servile employment on this sacred day, where there is really no ground for such a pretence; and to exhort withal, that we would consider it not only as a duty, but a privilege, to have a day thus set apart for the worship of God, wherein we have ordinarily nothing to do, but to "serve him with a quiet mind," free from all worldly cares and distractions, and wholly taken up with the spiritual exercises and delights of religion.

The other sort of men, who deserve reproof for the breach of the duty before us, are they who give themselves up, on this day, to sloth and idleness, or to the more impious pursuit of their vices and sinful pleasures, and keep it as a day of rest only from the serious concerns both of this life and of that which is to come.

These are indeed much worse than the former, inasmuch as it is worse to loiter away our Time, or to spend it in works of evil, than to employ it in the business and concern of an honest calling, where there is nothing of ill, but the improper time and undue manner of applying ourselves to it.

Pride, wantonness, or excess in eating and drinking, and what commonly attends it, "foolishly talking and jesting," which the
Apostle

Apostle says are not convenient, do ill become a Christian at any time ; but the unseemliness of them is greatest, and their guilt is much more aggravated, if men chuse the Lord's day to indulge in them : for,

Whether it be considered as a memorial of God's goodness in the creation, or of his infinite mercy in redeeming us, we may justly expostulate with them in the words of Moses :
“ Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish
“ people, and unwise ?”

Is this the way of celebrating his goodness, of acknowledging that “ he is thy father that
“ bought thee, and that it is he who made and
“ established thee ;” or (as it is in the prophet Jeremiah) “ will ye say we are delivered to do
“ all these abominations ?”

But, alas ! how many Christians are there who distinguish this day from the rest, only by luxury and drunkenness ? How many others are there who spend the greatest part of it “ in
“ outward-adorning and plaiting of the hair,
“ and wearing of gold, and putting on of apparel ;” as if the business of this day were only to make a better appearance than at other times, to raise the admiration or envy of our neighbours, or to trouble them with trifling and impertinent visits.

I shall

I shall add here, to what hath been already said, a few reflections upon the words of Isaiah (58, 13, 14) peculiarly applicable hereto.

Having, in the name of God, recommended goodness, charity, and compassion, in the preceding verses, the Prophet adds by the same authority, "If thou turn away thy foot from
"the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my
"holy day," that is, if you conscientiously suspend the ordinary business of life, and forbear to please and gratify your own inclinations, that with a free and composed mind you may attend upon the services of religion, for which he has sanctified the sabbath; and if you call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him; if you have such a sense of the excellency and benefit of the sabbath, that you take delight therein, accounting it a pleasure and happiness, as being consecrated to the worship of the most high God, and therefore honourable and glorious in itself; and honourable also to you, as it is a mark of the dignity of your nature, a token of your interest in the divine favour, and of your being admitted to communion with him; if in this persuasion you shall sincerely endeavour to honour God by employing the day in the offices of devotion, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor
speaking

speaking thine own words ; not doing the ordinary works of thy calling, nor spending the time in amusements or diversions, or in impertinent conversation ; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord ; then thou shalt become such a proficient in piety, and gain such a sense of God and religion, as will establish in thy heart a fund of holy pleasure, comfort, joy, and good hope towards God.

The Prophet, in this chapter, is inculcating real, vital, acceptable religion, goodness and compassion to our fellow creatures, and piety towards God in keeping the sabbath ; promising the like blessings to both those branches of true religion, namely, the favour of God, and the constant care of his providence. We may therefore take this from the spirit of God, as a just description of the right manner of sanctifying the sabbath, and assure ourselves that he who blessed the day will bless us in thus keeping it holy. But,

Secondly, “ And reverence my sanctuary,” which we can only do by constantly and devoutly attending it : and,

First, by constantly attending it on all proper occasions.

The great end of God’s dedicating it to his service was, that by our united prayers and addresses to him we might be more instrumental in

in promoting his honour and glory, and our own salvation.

What grounds then can we have to imagine, if our doing glory to God by our prayers be a proper means to recommend them to his acceptance, that we may pray as acceptably to him in private, as publicly in his "sanctuary." This imagination is not only altogether vain and groundless, but also highly impious on several accounts, and which are too obvious here to mention.

I do not hereby mean that we ought not to worship, or may not (in a lower sense) be said to praise God in private, but only that the prayers which are offered to him in private, upon our absenting without cause from his public worship, and, as it were, in opposition to it, cannot for this reason be acceptable to him.

Permit me here also to take notice of another instance of irreverence, which men are but too commonly guilty of, with respect to God's public worship, and that is, in their coming in late to it, after service is begun, or perhaps far advanced.

It is no uncharitable presumption, when people are thus slow and backward in repairing to the house of God, that they do not come out of any true motive of religion, or zeal for God's

honour, but purely in compliance to what is customary, or that they may avoid the imputation of infidelity, and not be thought to live altogether "without God in the world," which would be of ill consequence to them in the conduct of their temporal affairs.

There is indeed (besides the sin itself to us) a manifest inconveniency attending it to others; for by an unseasonable entrance into the house of God with little or no reverence, we disturb the attentions of the devout, especially when way is made for some great person or persons, to advance and distinguish themselves, as if the end of their coming here were not for obedience but triumph; not to humble themselves before God, but to procure a sacrifice to their own pride and vanity, and to shew their superiority above their fellow creatures.

But the disorders which such persons occasion do not terminate here; a great deal of ceremonious address is to be used, and many civilities exchanged, before they can compose themselves, or think it fit or reasonable that others should do so; though I do not here absolutely condemn a transient respect to others, where any particular occasion invites to it, even in our religious assemblies; but, where people look about them, to discover proper objects to whom they may pay their regards, here
the

the opportunity of shewing their good breeding is certainly very ill chosen; and the more they affect to shew it, the less they must be presumed to consider where, and in whose presence they are.

This irregularity of coming late to the public worship, discovers further a want of due reverence to the rules and orders of the church, which supposes the congregation “assembled “and met together,” at the beginning of the service.

Our excellent liturgy is designed, and with great prudence contrived, in all its parts, to promote piety. Among other instances to this end is this observable, viz. that after having opened the service with a general exhortation, it immediately proceeds to the general confession, thereby piously intending, that before we presume to ask any favour of God, we ought to make an humble acknowledgment of our sins and offences against him.

But, when people come to apply themselves to the throne of God’s grace, without any such proper and previous humiliation, this is adding presumption to their impiety, and giving cause to suspect, that they do not come to offer up their prayers with the publican as penitents, but with the pharisee, as “self-righteous “persons, who need no repentance.”

E. e. 2.

And,

And, therefore, I might shew further, that the irreverence I am speaking of gives just and general occasion of scandal; and if we are not permitted even innocent and lawful actions, when we may thereby wound the consciences of our weak brethren, a heavier load of guilt must certainly lie upon us from a behaviour thus directly criminal; and which, the wiser and more conscientious Christians are, the more they will still be offended at it.

Many other abuses, which are but too observable in these places, might here also be justly taken notice of, such as are inattention, unbecoming non-conformant postures, and sometimes irreverent and vague discourse, and talking of distant subjects; all which are high contempts and prophanations of this sacred place, and the momentous concern which we are here met to perform.

Let us but consider here how great a contradiction it is to the very end of our appearing before God, and addressing ourselves by prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving to him; instead of this, to make our addresses, and direct our discourses to one another, or to be guilty of any idle and impertinent behaviour, which discovers how little sense we have either of the proper business of the place, or of the presence we are in.

For

For indeed, if God do not perfectly see and take notice how we behave ourselves in his sanctuary, to what purpose are we met together before him? But, if he do (as most certainly he does, whether we consider it or not), with what exactness of behaviour, with what profound expressions of awe and reverence ought we to tread his courts, and present our requests before him!

As we would therefore give any evidence to ourselves or others, that we are sensible of what we are doing when “we come before the Lord, “and bow ourselves before the most high God,” let us attend with such seriousness and composure, with such awe and attention, as may testify the inward veneration and honour we have for him. How justly indeed may we otherwise apply to ourselves the words of the patriarch Jacob—“Surely the Lord is in this place, and “we knew it not.”

“How dreadful (had we but right apprehensions of it) is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.”

“Keep thy foot, therefore, when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil.”

Having thus spoken to what I proposed, I

shall add a few words before I conclude, on the great duty and necessity of cherishing and improving the advantages at these times vouchsafed us; and,

Above all things we should be careful that the impressions and good resolutions here made and taken up be duly cherished and executed by us; that they may have a lasting influence; that the fruit of our attendance may be discerned by the heavenliness of our temper, and by the uprightness of our life and conversation; that none of these public ministrations may be bestowed in vain, and be fruitless upon us.

We too often carry it, as if all that was required of us was to give our attendance, and therefore usually leave all behind us, and never think of it more. But it must be remembered, that when these things are vouchsafed us, it then becomes our charge, and we are accountable for the issue.

Our attendance on the public worship is but a means to somewhat more. It is designed to promote a godlike temper, and to improve purity of heart and life, and we should therefore reckon with ourselves that all is lost, if this end be not obtained; and, how should it be obtained but by after-thought, reflection, and improvement?

These days therefore cannot be rightly closed without calling ourselves to an account for our behaviour in them.

If,

If, upon review, we find we have but trifled; that there has been no more than bodily exercise, the soul all the while unemployed, it will profit us nothing, but to our condemnation, for our contempt and abuse of so precious vouchsafements, will minister to us, upon reflection, nothing but shame and self-reproach.

But if (after a due examination) we can say we have been enabled to offer a sincere, and therefore an acceptable worship, let us be thankful; but let us be sure also that this discover itself by its future walk in all purity and steady uprightness in faith and fervour, without which we embrace but a shadow, and an empty self-delusion.

I shall conclude all with the prevailing enforcement subjoined to the words before us.

“I am the Lord”—which is as though God had said, “I, who alone have a right to be worshipped, and who will not give my glory to another, command you to observe, in the most devout and solemn manner, such times and places as are more immediately consecrated and set apart for my worship and service; for, I am the Lord, the avenger of all who profane my sabbaths, and of all who irreverently approach my sanctuary, and will by no means hold them guiltless.”

S E R M O N X C I I .

Fervency in Devotion, in Opposition to
the prophaning the Sabbath, and Sanctu-
ary of the Lord.

ROM. xii. 11. “ *Fervent in Spirit, serving the
“ Lord.”*

TH E R E are (it is to be feared) many in
the world who imagine themselves to be
worthy performers of their Christian duty,
merely because they are regular and constant
in performing the outward forms and ceremo-
nies of religion, or religious worship, without
rectifying the temper of their minds, or alter-
ing the method of their lives ; but this error is
so evident and plain, that it wants no words
to shew the mistaken foundation upon which
it is built ; for no petition can possibly be ac-
ceptable to God, which is not offered up with
proper affections, and attended with proper
and becoming actions.

Was

Was it merely the outward operation which called down blessings from above, those who act through ostentation, and “a desire of being “seen of men,” or through prudential and interested motives, might expect them equally with the sincere and contrite; but of these our Saviour hath assured us that “they have their “reward;” they have the good opinion of men, which they sought after, and must therefore not expect any from God. And of all in general whose religion is mere outward shew, he pronounceth, that “the Lord detesteth all “those who approach him with their lips,” or by any other bodily operation only, “whilst “their hearts are far from him.”

Fervency and sincerity is the life of religion; is that which makes it an act of true devotion, and of high price in the sight of God.

We must give unto the Lord then our heart,* or all besides will prove a vain oblation.

“Be ye therefore not slothful in business,” the great business of religion, but “fervent in “spirit, serving the Lord.”

In my further prosecution of which words I shall, first, set before you a few considerations, shewing the reasonableness hereof, and then conclude with a motive for the further encouragement of it.

First,

* “Non vox, sed votum, non musica cordula, sed cor,
“Non ciamans, sed amans, psallit in aure Dei.”

First, The considerations which I shall lay down to this purpose shall be taken from the nature of God, ourselves, and the subject matter, which we all acknowledge to be the aim of our more important pursuits, viz. eternal life, and the preparative requisites thereto.

First, The nature of God cannot but shew forth the reasonableness of an earnest intention in the performance of every duty, whether of prayer, praise, or thanksgiving, or whatever other duty of holy living towards him. The nature of God cannot but strongly incline us “to do all these with an eye to the glory of “God.”

The object of our religious addresses is God, who is a spirit, and who will be worshipped in spirit, i. e. with all the faculties and powers of our mind, with the utmost intention and vigour of thought.

Parity of nature requires conformity of action, and therefore it follows (by way of necessary consequence) that because the nature of God is so far, so highly exalted, we must “walk before him in all holy conversation and “godliness, we must worship him with an holy “worship,” or more properly in the words before us, we must be “servent in spirit,” if we will “serve the Lord, who is a spirit.” Yea, “God is a spirit, we must therefore worship “him

“him in spirit and in truth; for the Father
“seeketh such to worship him.” But further,

God is a being whose presence is every where, and consequently sees all the ways, and all the actions of the sons of men.

Omnipresence is one of the perfections of God, by virtue of which attribute he is every where present, no place, however remote, being beyond the reach of his inspection—his centre being every where, and his circumference nowhere; and consequently nothing can be hid from his all-piercing, all-seeing eye.

Can it then be otherwise than reasonable for us to serve God thus, i. e. fervently and affectionately, when we consider that we are, at all times, and in all places, in the presence, in the immediate presence of God? We are very careful in the presence even of an earthly Prince, when he either speaks to us, or we to him; and surely much more ought we to be so, when we are in the presence of God, who is constituted “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.” But how little is this regarded, (I speak it to our shame) and by how few among us!

But again: To this omnipresence of God we add his omniscience also, which is but a result therefrom; for, if he is every where present, and “his eyes are upon all the ways of
“the

“the sons of men,” then of course he must know them.

“Known unto God are all things,”—for, as “he is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways,” so “he knoweth the thoughts of our hearts afar off, and there is not a word in our tongue but he knoweth it altogether.”

When, therefore, we perform any part of our duty to God, we must give him our heart, or all besides will prove a vain oblation.

As God by his omnipresence sees and inspects our outward actions, so by his omniscience he knows, and takes perfect cognizance of the inward thoughts and intents of our hearts. Dare we then to absent our thoughts, and dissemble with our Maker, when “we are thus wholly naked and open before him?”

Holy David was so sensible of this, that he summoned every faculty and affection of his soul, “all that is within him,” to do homage to God, well knowing that a mere outward profession would be an useless performance to that God, who requireth truth in “the inward parts, to whom all things are naked and open, and who trieth the very hearts and reins.”

“Bless the Lord, O my soul (says he), and all that is within me bless his holy name.”

Secondly,

Secondly, Let us consider our own nature, as well as that of the Divine Being; and we shall be yet further convinced in the duty before us.

Are we not reasonable creatures? and, as such ought we not to pay an entire reasonable service? But, can we in any way be supposed to do this, when the better half of us is unconcerned in the act?

It is the mind chiefly that is the man; when that is absent, the man is not truly nor properly present; he offers not a living victim, but a dead carcass, and how can God be well pleased with such a sacrifice?

What is prayer, but an assent of the mind towards God, an holy engine by which we lift up our spirits to the great Father of Spirits, maintaining a sweet intercourse with him, breathing out from the bottom of our hearts our common desires to him!

But, how can this be done whilst “our hearts are far from him?” In Scripture, great things are said to be done by the efficacy of faith, and the virtue of prayer, but how!

Not by the mere bending of the knees, or the mere uttering of words and syllables, but by the attention of the heart, by zeal and fervency: It is only “the fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much;” for, it

is not to be imagined that those devotions which affect not us should affect God, or that he should regard and attend to such requests, as we neither attend to nor regard ourselves.

Let us not then mock God, nor deceive ourselves; for all this is so far from making amends for the impiety of our lives, that (on the contrary) it doth but increase our condemnation.

Let us not then at any time think that we have performed our duty, merely because we have made a shew thereof, nor hope to atone by an outward, though decent behaviour, for an inward alienated mind. But,

Let us, whenever we come to perform an holy office, come whole and entire, to "offer
"and present unto God ourselves, our souls
"and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and
"lively sacrifice unto him," which is not to be done "with our lips only, when our hearts
"are far from him." But,

Let us worship him in the same manner as we are obliged to love him, even "with all
"our heart, and with all our soul, and with
"all our mind, and with all our strength;" for this is but our bounden duty, and our reasonable service.

Thirdly, What will evidence this yet more fully is, the subject matter of all our pursuits,
viz.

viz. eternal life, and the preparative requisites thereto.

We will here suppose (though but merely so) that God would forego the ineffable attributes of his nature; that he matters not whether his children are like him or no; i. e. worship him agreeable to his nature, in purity of heart and mind; that he lays by both his omnipresence and omniscience, and does not regard either the fervency or sincerity of all or any of our actions, and not only so, but that man was at liberty to let his imaginations wander “ac-
“ cording to his own inventions;” yet, is it to be imagined that pardon of sin, peace of conscience, the fruits of the spirit, support against temptations, and the blessings of this life and the next, (with which God hath promised to reward our prayers) should be purchased at the cheap expence of forms and appearances only?

Small things are and may be easily acquired, but these are prizes well worth our striving for. It is not a lazy wish, or an idle endeavour, that will make us “meet to be made partakers
“ of the inheritance of the Saints in light;” no, but it is an earnest and fervent striving for it, both in word and deed; “our soul must so
“ thirst after it, even as the hart panteth after
“ the water-brooks, so must our soul thirst af-
F f 2 “ ter

“ter God, and the great things of his goodness.”

The never-fading pleasures at God's right hand are not like those tinsel trifles which here so captivate us, and which are no sooner had but gone, and which we so vehemently contend for, and dearly purchase, but are never-fading and inestimable; and for which jewel, the “richest wise merchant would be justified, yea commended in the sale of all he hath, in order to purchase it.”

Shall we then so contend for the things which perish, and are not, and let pass the things which are eternal? yea, shall the kingdom of glory stand as not worth a single effort?

The greater and more valuable any thing is, the more difficult generally is it to be obtained; and, as the kingdom of Heaven, and its preparative requisites, are most inestimable, therefore we must earnestly contend for them, and be “servant in spirit,” if we will obtain them. The duty I have been recommending is a disposition seated in the heart, and founded upon true Christian principles, and which indeed, in the eye of the Gospel, can alone render our services acceptable.

Though the Heathen Moralists regarded no more than the outward performance of actions, yet the Christian religion (far more refined) looks

looks principally to the temper and intention with which actions are performed, and requires "truth in the inward parts."—See v. I. p. 73.

Upon the whole, seeing that known unto God are all things, and that we cannot impose upon him as we do upon men, by a mere "form of godliness without the power thereof," seeing that we are constituted reasonable creatures, and therefore owe an entire reasonable service; seeing that the benefits and blessings profered us are so immense as not to be purchased by a faint velleity, or a bare desire,

What other conclusion can we draw from the whole, but that we ought to be "fervent in spirit when we serve the Lord?"

To conclude. The preceding discourse carrying its own exhortation with it, I need but briefly touch on the motive I am now to lay before you.

It is to the Lord we are to be thus fervent in our duty; it is to the Lord, who is faithful and true, and who will not forget our labour of love, and earnest contentions and fervency towards him; it is to the Lord, "who is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness," but will (in his own due time) for these our devotions "restore us seven-fold into our bosom."

Surely therefore we shall have no cause to complain, how ardently soever we desire the

kingdom of God ; yea, if we desire it (as we ought) above all things, if at last we obtain it ; for, “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, “ neither hath it entered into the heart of man “ to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that diligently seek him.”

These considerations, if but rightly attended to and improved, cannot fail, but must so actuate upon us, as to make us “ fervent in spirit, even as those should be, who serve the “ Lord.”

SERMON

S E R M O N X C I I I .

On the Holy Sacrament, and the Necessity of partaking.

JOHN vi. 53. *“ Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son
“ of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no Life
“ in you.”*

THOUGH these words were spoken by our Lord before the institution of his Sacrament, yet the ancient church generally understood them as having respect hereto: my design from them, therefore, is to inculcate the necessity of frequenting the communion as often as conveniently we can, as we tender the salvation of our souls, and the Christian life hereby implanted in us.

Among the many complaints made by the more considerate and sober Christians, against the neglect of duty, we find none more common, or indeed more just, than those made against the neglect of what is here so expressly enjoined

enjoined us, the constant and duly receiving of the Lord's Supper, a peculiar obstinacy generally prevailing against this ordinance; inso-much that many, otherwise continuing in a fair communion with the church, in all other respects and parts of the established public worship, do seldom or never frequent this; towards which they are estranged with the indifference or averfeness becoming the most arbitrary or unreasonable practice; as if there was nothing of duty or advantage in the ordinance, but every man was left to his own freedom, and it were the wisest choice not to meddle therewith.

To correct this error is my design in the words before us, which are so expressive of the obligations we are under hereto, implying arguments peculiarly persuasive to an observance, and dissuasive from a sinful omission of it; it being enacted most absolutely upon the authority of our Saviour, and again left to us, as his last and dying injunction; for which he hath expressed a very particular concern, and wherein he hath shewn himself very tender of, and gracious towards us; to neglect it therefore must greatly aggravate guilt, and justly expose to extreme punishment and severe condemnation.

All which considerations, being duly explained, cannot amount to less than a demonstration of the necessity of duly receiving of the
Lord's

Lord's Supper, and of the unreasonableness and danger of our neglecting it.

Our command to do it is absolute, without limitation or restriction, whereby all are compromised, and liberty or choice left to none to refuse it; "except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, he have no life in you."

All therefore that are of the church of Christ, who profess themselves his disciples, who desire and hope for salvation by his sufferings and death, are here spoke to, and positively commanded to be partakers herein; which therefore ought to have the same regard with us as any other command of the gospel whatever.

He therefore that supinely and wilfully allows himself in the neglect of this ordinance, may as reasonably deny the authority of God in any other, and may as reasonably expect to be saved and pardoned in that as in this; for, the commands of God are all bound upon us by the same authority, and the breach of them are all liable to the same condemnation.

However, we must not here omit to add, that there are peculiarly aggravating circumstances attending the neglect of the duty before us; in that it is a means and promoter of almost all other virtues. He that neglects any other positive precept of the law, may not perhaps

haps be thereby hindered in the rest of his duty; but he who neglects this ordinance of the Lord, doth by necessary consequence debar himself from almost every Christian privilege; yea, (and I may add in the words of my text) hath no life.

This may be easily seen, from the advantages attending the rightly performing this holy mystery, which is ordained by God as a means to support our spiritual life begun in baptism, and to repair the decays of grace, that we may grow and increase in holiness; for to this end not only the remoter and accidental advantages of preparation, such as the examining of ourselves, and prayer, with full purposes of amendment, which are by others deferred, to the encrease and encouragement of sin; these are very considerable improvements to the increase and security of our spiritual state, but much more are the intrinsic benefits of the celebration of the ordinance itself, efficacious helps against all assaults of spiritual enemies from without, and the remedy of all the maladies of the soul within, “our souls being strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as “our bodies are by the bread and wine;” new vigour being instilled into our souls by the immortal food duly received in the holy eucharist, increasing and exercising all the habits of faith,
and

and engaging the divine blessing to "help our "unbelief," stimulating repentance, and applying and confirming "the remission of sins," whereof this Sacrament is a sign, is a token and pledge. It obliges moreover to a very particular forgiveness of all our enemies, which is the very condition upon which our own forgiveness depends, hereby confirming "peace "on earth, and good will towards men;" exciting the grace of love and charity, both towards God and our fellow creatures, by all the engagements of love herein remembered and set before us, knitting us in closer union with Christ, advancing and enlivening our hope, by the assuring us of the covenant of mercy hereby sealed to us; heightening the Christian's joy and comfort in the transporting embraces of our dearest Lord, and in the exercise of raised and refined devotion, which is the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and administering to every well-disposed soul the pledge and foretaste of future and eternal glory.

In a word, this feast is to us whatever we need, is wisdom, is righteousness, is sanctification and redemption, as possessing us of him who is so, and "with whom God freely giveth "all things."

So that this "eating the flesh of life, and "drinking his blood," is no barren nor unprofitable

profitable ceremony, but fully replete with every good; yea, for "except ye do this, ye have no life in you."

God having instituted this as a means for our growth in grace, and improvement of all virtue, and continuance in the rights and congregation of Christians—if, therefore, we use them aright, we are entitled to all the privileges of it; but if we refuse and reject them, they exclude us from any part or portion therein; so says the text, which are the words of highest authority, even the words of Christ himself, our Lord and master, in whose memory we are commanded to receive it.

"Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

And now, after this, what words can be added further, whereby more strongly to enforce a due and constant receiving so solemn and beneficial an institution? for, thus tender and gracious towards us hath our Lord shewn himself herein, that his authority is wholly expressed in love and kindness to us, insomuch that to disobey him in it is injury to ourselves, and the refusal of so much good must be an occasion of the greater evil upon us.

For, hereby our guilt will be aggravated, even beyond what ordinarily attends the breach of other divine precepts, there being peculiar aggravations

aggravations attending it, besides the loss of life to ourselves, and which are the occasions of this evil to us ; for, the least that can be said hereof is, that hereby the authority and love, and wisdom of our Lord, are unworthily contemned ; our profession, our baptism, our faith, and the divine assistance, denied ; an offence and discouragement to good men is hereby given ; an inlet to divisions, to ignorance and immorality, is certainly laid open, and an occasion created of insupportable grief in our latter end, when the remembrance of these things shall come upon us ; all which, as they mightily enforce the necessity of receiving, so do they more convincingly discover the aggravated guilt of our neglecting it.

As to the pleas and pretences which men make, whereby to excuse themselves herefrom, they are many of them so trifling, that one would think that men (otherwise sensible) should be ashamed to mention them in their excuse ; and as to the others, there are none but might as well excuse them from all other religious duties whatever ; and why they are only levelled against this, can no otherwise be rationally accounted for, than by imputing it to our tempter's malice, and the subtlety of Satan, to ruin us withhimself, by taking off hereby the greatest restraint from sin, and

promoter of obedience in this one duty, the omission whereof so infallibly introduces the neglect of all others. But,

Whatever pretences men may make, whereby shamefully to excuse themselves, they may all of them be resolved into this single source, sin, which withholds them from every virtue.

If, indeed, men are resolved to continue in their evil ways, they certainly do well not to communicate, or indeed to do any one single act or office of religion, that they may not thereby add the further sin of hypocrisy to their other impieties.

But, if this be our plea, and sin and wickedness, and the impiety of our lives, be our chief excuse, I cannot then better address you than in the words of our excellent mother the Church, in her exhortation to this purpose, viz.

“ If any man say I am a grievous sinner,
“ and am therefore afraid to come, wherefore
“ then do ye not repent and amend ? ”

“ When God calleth you, are ye not ashamed
“ to say ye will not come ? When ye should
“ return to God, will ye excuse yourselves,
“ and say ye are not ready ? Consider earnestly
“ with yourselves how little such feigned ex-
“ cuses will avail before God . ”

If we did but remove this one objection,
“ the impiety of our lives,” from before us, I
may

may venture to affirm, that no other would be of sufficient force to keep us from the banquet of this most heavenly food ; for, so long as a man keeps himself in this state, he is always prepared, and (contrarywise) without this preparation ; if there was no other, this alone would be sufficient to render this, and all his other sacrifices, "an abomination to the Lord," and evince, that, as he is unprepared to appear in his presence in these symbols, he is much more unfit (if it should please God to call him hence) to appear before him in his heavenly kingdom.

S E R M O N X C I V .

A due Preparation for the Sacrament enforced; the Opposite of neglecting it.

I. COR. xi. 29. *“He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself.”*

IT being a duty absolutely required of every Christian to be himself a partaker of the Lord's Supper, it follows, that every one ought to endeavour sincerely to prepare himself for it according to the dignity of so great a mystery, lest otherwise (as medicine unadvisedly or irregularly taken proves hurtful to the body) so this spiritual food and remedy, intended by Christ for the good of the soul, should only tend to its hurt and eternal destruction; for,

*“He that eateth and drinketh unworthily,
“eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.”*

The punishment inflicted upon the Corinthians for their irreverent and contemptuous
usage

usage of "the body and blood of Christ," was temporal judgments, that being "chastened of the Lord, they might not be condemned with the world:" they had "provoked God to plague them with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death;" by which it appears that temporal judgments must be understood by that word which our translators render here "damnation;" though, it must be acknowledged, that if these temporal inflictions had not produced amendment and reformation; such a contempt of holy things might and would have made them obnoxious to the eternal judgments of God.

I have premised this, in hopes to deliver men (if possible) from those mistaken notions of worthily receiving this blessed Sacrament, which they, who would excuse their not frequenting it, pretend to ground upon the passage before us; with how little reason they do so, this exposition sufficiently makes evident.

But, at the worst, the danger of neglecting and contemning a plain command of our Saviour is more hazardous to our salvation, than our performing it without some due degree of qualification.

The duty therefore being necessary to be performed, the true conclusion and consequence we should draw from the danger of performing

it unworthily, should be to excite us to great care and diligence in preparing for the due discharge of it, but never to delude ourselves by false reasons to such a neglect of it as will certainly increase our condemnation.

The abuse which the Apostle here condemns, and for which he assures the unworthy receivers of their sure infliction, was, riot and excess in these solemn assemblies where all brought their own, and they who came first eat first, and they who contributed much, eat the more in abundance, and the poor were sent empty away; "one (says the Apostle) is hungry, and "another is drunken."

But, in a church like our's, where the consecrated elements are furnished at the public expence, where no man brings or takes of himself, but all are delivered by the priest, without respect of persons, where distribution is made equally, decently, and devoutly, and as near to the primitive order and institution as can well be imagined, is it not clear, even to a demonstration, that the unworthiness here charged upon the Corinthians neither is, nor possibly can be our's? and, if so, it must follow, that this, and the like texts of St. Paul, are perverted to a very wrong use, when made the pretence of keeping men from the holy table, whose

whose present circumstances have no manner of concern in, or relation to them.

We indeed readily allow, that men may be under the danger of receiving unworthily, upon several other accounts, as well as this.

Every notorious offence against, and every wilful failure in, the particulars of our Christian duty, which are required as fit preparations for this blessed ordinance, does, without doubt, render us unworthy. But,

The Apostle, after denouncing the judgments of God against unworthy communicants, doth not, for prevention of these, exhort them to consult their own safety, by abstaining altogether, but in “examining and judging
“ themselves, so to eat of that bread, and drink
“ of that cup.”

Thus, as before recited, did the Apostle, and thus doth our Church most excellently reason.
“ If any man say I am a grievous sinner, and
“ therefore am afraid to come, wherefore then
“ do ye not repent and amend? When God
“ calleth you, are ye not ashamed to say ye will
“ not come? When ye should return to God,
“ will ye excuse yourselves, and say ye are not
“ ready? Consider with yourselves how little
“ such feigned excuses will avail before God.”

In short, he that comes not, and he that comes unworthily, are both of them guilty before

fore the Lord ; the former because he will not use his best remedy, and the latter because he prophanes and abuses it ; and there is but one way for both to be safe, and that is, by coming as often, and as well prepared, as they can, and then God will not fail to forgive, and kindly to accept them.

Did men but consider (and which is most certainly true) that every act of religion, whether public or private, requires the same disposition of mind with this of the Sacrament ; that reading, and hearing, and praying unworthily, i. e. without due reverence, and in the love and indulgence of any sin, is proportionably destructive, as unworthy communicating.

Did men but consider this, they would soon see cause to alter their measures with relation to this matter ; they would find that the excuses usually alledged for the neglect of this would, if pursued through their just consequences, hold every whit as strongly for casting off every branch of solemn worship enjoined by the Christian religion.

We speak not this with the least intent to lower the respect and care due to this holy ordinance—God forbid ; but would gladly heighten it for other duties also ; such as prayer, public and private, hearing God's word, and the like, which are too commonly done,
only

only as things of course; and yet there is not one of all these, the due performance whereof doth not require the same sorrow for our past sins, the same steadfast purpose of amendment, the same faith in Christ, the same charity for our fellow Christians and all men, as doth communicating at the holy table. No man is accepted by God in any of these, who is not fit to come to the other.

In a word, no man who leads a good life can ever be unprepared for the holy Sacrament; and no man who leads a bad and wicked life can come prepared to this, or any other Christian ordinance whatever; yea, no man can be savingly in Christ, who obeys not his laws.

So that (as I have already said) the duty before us being necessary to be performed, the true consequence we should draw from the danger of performing it unworthily, should be to excite ourselves to exceeding great care and diligence in preparing ourselves for the due discharge of it, but never to delude ourselves by false reasons, to such a neglect as will certainly increase our condemnation.

This Sacrament therefore can be neglected by none but those who do not understand it, or who are unwilling by it to be bound to their duty; but such persons have no reason to
fear

fear of being in a worse condition, since they are already as bad as they can be; for, if they are unfit to appear in the presence of God in these symbols (even by their own confession), they are, and must be much more unfit, if it should please God to call them hence, to appear before him in his heavenly kingdom.

The total want of a due preparation, tho' it may render us unfit at present to receive this Sacrament, yet doth it by no means excuse our neglect of it.

One fault may draw on another, but can never excuse it; it is our great fault that we are wholly unprepared; now, no man can claim any benefit by his fault, or plead it in excuse of his neglect.

The proper inference and conclusion from the whole is, not to cast off all thoughts of receiving it, but immediately to set about the work of preparation, that so we may be fit to receive it; for, if this be true, that they who are absolutely unprepared ought not receive it, nor can do it with any benefit—nay, by doing it in such a manner, they render their condition much worse, this is a most forcible argument to repentance and amendment of life.

There is nothing more reasonable in this, than immediately to resolve upon a better course, that we may be “meet partakers of these

“these holy mysteries,” and may no longer provoke God’s wrath against us by the wilful neglect of so great and necessary a duty of the Christian religion.

This was the advice which the Apostle gave the Corinthians, after his severe rebuke of their abuse herein; “but (says he) let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

He doth not advise them, on account of their unworthiness, to consult their safety, by abstaining altogether from all communion herein, as knowing that that would increase their condemnation, but, contrariwise, so to examine their past conduct, and the errors of their lives, in order to repentance and amendment, that so they might “become meet partakers of these holy mysteries.”

This is a duty much to be encouraged among Christians, that they (in reviewing their lives) may sincerely repent them of all their miscarriages, and fix themselves in the steady purpose and resolution of a better conduct; particularly when we expect to have the forgiveness of our sins sealed to us, we should lay aside all enmity, and all thoughts of revenge, and sincerely forgive those that have offended us, and, above all things, put in practice that universal

versal love and charity, which is represented to us by this holy communion; and,

To this purpose we are earnestly exhorted by our Mother, the Church (in her public office to this purpose), “to repent us truly for
“our past sins; to have a lively and steadfast
“faith in Christ our Saviour; to amend our
“lives; and to be in perfect charity with all
“men; and,

Because the examination of ourselves is a thing so very useful, and a duty which ought some time to be done, and the time which men are wont to set apart for their due preparation herefore, is so advantageous an opportunity for the practice of it, I cannot therefore but very much commend those who take this occasion to search and try their ways, and to call themselves to a more strict account of their actions. Were it not for this solemn occasion, some perhaps would never find time to recollect themselves at all, or to take the condition of their souls into any serious consideration; for by common experience we find, that what may be done at any time, is but too generally done at no time, and is altogether neglected.

All the reflection I shall make from the consideration of what hath been said, shall be earnestly to excite all who profess and call themselves Christians to a due preparation of them-
selves

selves for this holy ordinance, and to a frequent participation of it, according to the intention of our Lord and Saviour in the institution of it, and to the undoubted practice of Christians in the primitive and best times, when men had more devotion, and fewer scruples about their duty.

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our graces, and our slow progress and improvement in Christianity, whilst we wilfully despise the best means of our growth in goodness.

Well do we deserve that God should send leanness into our souls, and make them to consume away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when God spreads a bountiful table for us, and sets "the bread of life" before us, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thanksgiving.

These things (if earnestly considered) cannot fail, but must have their due effect and influence upon us.

S E R M O N XCV.

Of the great Benefit of Consideration.

PSALM iv. 4. "*Commune with your own Heart.*"

ALL those who have prescribed the rules and methods of holy living, have laid down this as an indispensable condition in order thereto, viz. "That we should frequently "call our own ways to remembrance," and look well into the "state of our souls, that we "may confirm and strengthen every good habit "and resolution, and reform and amend what- "ever we shall see of evil before us—Com- "mune with your own heart."

A great part of the evils of our lives would be reformed, if we would but once lay them to heart; would we but seriously consider the consequences of a wicked life, we should see such evident reasons and necessity for the reforming of it, that we should by no means venture any longer therein.

Self

Self examination therefore and consideration being of so great a benefit to the reforming of the lives of men, and strengthening them in all goodness, I shall particularly apply myself to them under the following heads :

First, I shall shew the import of the phrase "commune with your own heart."

Secondly, The great benefit we may expect therefrom,

Concluding with a few observations to enforce the same.

As to the first, it implies consideration in general, and an examination of our ways and conduct in particular.

It signifies a general survey and examination of our lives, respecting indifferently all our actions, whether good or bad, and comparing them with the law of God, which is the rule and measure of our duty, that we may thereby understand the true state and condition of our souls, and so discerning how many and great our faults and defects are, we may amend whatever is amiss, and be more careful observers of our duty for the future, and improve, cherish, and increase whatever good we shall find within us.

"Commune with your own heart," i. e. before we speak or act, let us deliberate well upon the subject matter of our words and actions,

and the consequences of things, and be cautious in every thing we say or do, that we offend not. This, together with the nature of sin, and the ill effects thereof, both with respect to this life, and the world to come, and of virtue and its advantages, are the import of the phrase before us, and are all of them included, when we are required by the Psalmist to “commune
“with your own heart.”

Secondly, I am to lay before you the great benefit and advantage we may expect from a due and proper discharge hereof.

In regard to the state and condition of our souls, it must needs be, at all times, a thing of excellent use and benefit, for men to set apart some particular times for the examination of themselves, that they may know how accounts stand between God and their own souls; and especially before any undertaking of moment, prudence requires all wise men to weigh things well in the balance of reason, and to judge whether there be any due proportion between the hazard run and the end proposed, and whether all things will account well at the last.

Pythagoras (or whoever was the author of those golden verses which pass under his name) doth especially recommend this practice to all his disciples, to make “the outgoings of the
“morning

"morning and the evening" the occasions to account for the actions of the time past, enquiring wherein they had transgressed, and what good they had done or omitted to do.

And this, no doubt, is an admirable means to improve men in virtue, and a most effectual way to keep our consciences continually awake and tender, and to make us stand in awe of ourselves, and be afraid to sin, as knowing beforehand that we must give a strict and severe account to ourselves for every sin.

It is certainly a great piece of wisdom to make up our accounts as frequently as we can, that our repentance may (in some measure) keep pace with the errors and miscarriages, and failings of our lives, and that we may not be oppressed and confounded by the insupportable weight of the sins of a whole life falling upon us all at once, and that too perhaps at the very worst time, when we are sick and weak, and have neither understanding nor leisure to recollect ourselves, or to call our sins distinctly to remembrance, much less to exercise any fit or proper acts of repentance for them.

This surely is, and must be, a very unfit time to examine how many and great the sins of our lives have been, and to state accounts so long depending between God and our own souls. Is it not therefore by far the wisest course we

can take, to “commune with our hearts” early, in the morning of our trespasses, and “in the “time of sins to shew repentance?”

This was the method holy David took, and the return was answerable: “I thought (says “he) on my ways, and turned my feet to thy “testimonies.”

If we did but consider the matter thoroughly, and had but patience to reason with ourselves, the conclusion must naturally be, the quitting of that evil and dangerous course in which we have lived; for sin and consideration are very unsuitable companions, and therefore cannot long dwell together: yea, did men but consider what sin is, they would have so many unanswerable objections against it, such strong fears and jealousies of the miserable issue and event of a wicked life, that they would not dare to continue any longer therein; for,

How can any man, who hath any love or regard for himself, any tenderness for his own interest and happiness, see hell and destruction before him, which, if he hold on still in his evil course, will certainly swallow him up, and yet venture to go on still in his wickedness?

Can any man that plainly beholds misery hastening towards him “like an armed man, “and destruction coming upon him as a whirl-
“wind,”

“wind,” think himself not concerned either to prevent or fly from it?

The most dull and stupid creatures will start back upon the sight of present danger; and will any considerate man, who hath calculated the dangerous event of sin, and the dreadful effects of God’s wrath upon sinners, go on still to “provoke the Lord to jealousy, as if we were “stronger than He?”

It is not to be imagined, but that if men would seriously consider what sin is, and what will be the sad portion of sinners hereafter, they would immediately resolve upon a better course.

We should therefore have exceeding hopes of men’s repentance and amendment, if they could but once be brought to consideration; for, in most men, it is not so much a positive disbelief of the truth, as inadvertency and want of consideration, which makes them to go on so securely in a sinful course.

Every man may consult his own experience, how often he has committed sin, not so much from the force of temptation, as through inadvertency and surprize, yea, there are some sins in particular, which (out of respect to the common sense and reason of mankind) we ought not to suppose they could be guilty of, would

would they take the least time to consider the nature and flaming guilt of them.

An awful fear of offending the just and all-powerful God is a natural, or rather necessary effect of consideration; "therefore (saith holy Job) am I troubled at his presence, when I consider I am afraid of him." How can we then imagine that men, who are guilty of any crying sins, can have any thought or reflection during the time of their committing them? How often should we preserve ourselves therefore from evil, if, before we enter upon any action, we would but take time to consult reason, and examine the fitness, decency, and lawfulness of it? and, indeed, without such examination, we are not so properly rational, as blind and mechanical agents.

To prevent the disorders which we are apt, through inadvertency, to fall into, the Scriptures command us to "keep our hearts with all diligence, to stand in awe, and to commune with our own hearts," and to take heed to the unerring rule of God's word, wherein holy David was so conversant, that he even "prevailed the night watches."

Would men therefore but consider with themselves before they act, and understand within themselves what will be the fearful consequences of sin, probably in this world, but
most

most certainly in the next, they could scarce transgress; yea, and would look upon sin as the greatest evil in the world, and consequently avoid it.

All that now remains is, to offer two or three arguments, whereby to enforce what hath been said.

First, Consideration is the proper act of reasonable creatures.

This argument God himself useth to bring men to a sense of their evil ways. "Remember this, and shew yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors."

To consider our ways, and to call our sins to remembrance, is to shew ourselves men.

It is the fault and infelicity of a great many, that they generally live without thinking, and are actuated only by present inclinations and appetites, without any consideration of the future consequence of things, "like brute beasts, which have no understanding," and who act only for the present moment; whereas to a prudent and considerate man, a good or evil, in reversion, is capable of as true an estimation, proportionably to the greatness and distance of it, as if it were really present. Besides,

What hath God given us our reason and understanding for, but to foresee evils at a distance, to prevent them, and to provide for our
future

future security and happiness: "To look up
 "to God, our Maker, who hath taught us
 "more than the beasts of the earth, and made
 "us wiser than the fowls of the air." Solomon makes it the character of a wise man to
 "foresee an evil, and hide himself." But no
 man sure can long preserve the character of a
 good man, who doth not prepare and fore-arm
 himself against the surprize of temptation. It
 is with great reason therefore that the Prophet
 makes foresight the happy preservative of inno-
 cence. "Blessed is the man who observeth
 "his hand," or keeps a watchful eye upon his
 own actions, "lest he do any evil."

So that for a man not to "commune with
 "his heart," i. e. not to consider his ways, is
 to the very best to be without understanding,
 and "like the beasts that perish." But,

Secondly, This is the end of God's patience
 and long-suffering towards us, to bring us to
 consideration.

The great design of God's goodness is to
 "bring men to repentance," and "he winks
 "at the sins of men, that they may repent,"
 that they may "consider their ways and be
 "wise."

He gives them liberty of second thoughts,
 that they may reflect, and reason themselves
 into repentance. "O that men would there-
 "fore

“fore praise the Lord for his goodness, and
“render him an answerable return for all his
“kindness to the sons of men.”

Thirdly, Consideration is that which we must all come to, one time or other. Reflection is the business of man; a sense of his state ought to be his first duty; the longer therefore it is delayed, the more heavy will its burthen be when it falls upon us.

The time of sickness and old age will necessarily intrude serious thoughts upon us, when alas! perhaps, it may be too late; for, in the midst of our thoughts, hurry, confusion, and infirmities, eternity may swallow us up.

How much wiser a course then is it to consider these things in time, in order to our eternal peace and comfort: To think of them, whilst it is in our power to redress them, and so avoid the dismal consequence of their final issue, and not to defer it, till our case is desperate and past remedy.

What can I say more here, to persuade to the duty before us!

We are generally apt to busy ourselves in observing the errors and miscarriages of our brethren, and are forward to mark and censure the faults and follies of other men; but how few descend into themselves, to discern the hidden defilements of their own souls!

It

It is an excellent saying of a great philosopher, "No man was ever unhappy for not
"prying into the actions and conditions of
"other men; but that man is necessarily un-
"happy, who doth not observe himself, and
"consider the state of his own soul."

I am sensible of the unpleasantness of the duty before us, and therefore I marvel not men are so backward and averse to it.

They whose lives have been one continued round in sin, are, and must needs be, so odious a spectacle to themselves, that they care not to reflect seriously at all of themselves, or search into their hidden defilements, as knowing that great disturbance must arise in their minds from thence, and therefore, above all things, they hate consideration, and are ready to say to it, as the evil spirit in the Gospel did to our Saviour, "What have I to do with thee? Art
"thou come to torment me before my time?"

But let not this deter us from so necessary an employ; for whatever trouble it may cause at present, we may safely affirm that "the work
"of it, in the end, will be peace, and the effect of it quietness and rest, and assurance
"for ever."

To conclude: How miserable is that man, who cannot look backward but with shame, nor forward without terror? What comfort will

will his riches afford him in his extremity, or what will all his sensual pleasures, his vain and empty titles or dignities, avail him, in the day of his distress? Whilst (on the other hand) he who can look back upon his life, spent in the employ worthy of him, how doth it exhilarate and revive him, enabling him to pass his own approbation on himself, and (as it were) to anticipate the "euge" he shall one day receive from his great master.

Such is the life of him who considers his ways and is wise; who "so numbers his days
"as to apply his heart unto wisdom;" how much more happy then in his death, and in the fruition of the reward of all his labours!

"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord.

"Commune with thyself therefore, O man!
"and consider wherefore thou art made.

"Contemplate thy powers, contemplate thy
"wants and thy connections, so shalt thou discover the duties of life, and be directed in
"all thy ways.

"Proceed not to speak or act, before thou
"hast weighed thy words, and examined well
"the tendency of every step thou shalt take;
"so shall disgrace fly far from thee, and in thy
"house shall shame be a stranger; repentance

“ shall not visit thee, nor shall sorrow dwell
“ upon thy cheek.

“ Hearken therefore unto the voice of confi-
“ deration; her words are the words of wisdom,
“ and her paths shall lead thee to safety and
“ truth.”

S E R M O N X C V I .

Of the Evil and Danger of hardening the
Heart, the Opposite of Consideration.

PROV. xxviii. 14. *“He that hardeneth his Heart
shall fall into Mischief.”*

THERE are several observations in this chapter, which (as most parts in this book) have no connection or dependence upon one another. In this which we have in the text there are two things worthy consideration.

First, An evil practice of “hardening the heart.”

Secondly, The ill consequence attending it, which is “falling into mischief.” “He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.”

Of these two points I shall speak in their order, and then conclude with a brief application.

And, first, we have here proposed to our consideration an evil practice of “hardening the heart.”

We find this so frequently mentioned in Scripture, that we may conclude it to be a common practice, though taken notice of and observed but by few.

We have frequent warnings and admonitions to beware of it, as "harden not your hearts as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness."

And again, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

And yet, notwithstanding these gracious warnings, how frequently do we find men charged with it? I shall therefore explain the evil practice hereof, that we may know and avoid it. And here,

To "harden the heart," is (in any way) to be inattentive to the calls of providence, or inconsiderate of our own estate; is to withstand the ordinance and commands of the most High, and to sin in despite of our own conscience, and the convictions of grace; is to despise the promises and threatenings of the Almighty, and to be proof against the influence of his holy spirit, and every means of our conviction: no marvel then that mischief should befall it.

"He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."

The natural influence which inconsideration hath to stifle every generous sentiment within
us,

us, and to make us sit easy under the most dangerous circumstances, is too evident here to admit of enlargement ; it being thought only, and consideration alone, that quickens our sentiments of things, and makes us see our real estate before us.

The heart, through inconsideration, may in time lose the power of its discerning faculties, and through a long round in evil habits, may at length come to confound the distinction of things, and then evil may be equal with good unto us ; yea, and being accustomed to take the wrong lead, will most naturally (through inadvertency) prefer evil for ever.

This indeed is generally the first step to all grosser acts, and is what naturally leads to them. We ought therefore to keep our hearts tender, by frequent reflection, lest through the rust of inactivity it should lose its power, and so fall an easy prey to incessant sins, till it be habitually addicted thereto.

But further: Not only thro' inconsideration, but through obstinacy also in disobedience, may we be guilty hereof ; this is a natural product of the former ; for when the mind hath been long-inured to evil, not considering the consequences of it, it equally proceeds, at length, to the more gross acts of violation, without either care or concern.

When therefore we know God's will, but will not do according thereto, this is an opposing our will to his will, and is an "hardening of our hearts" against him. Thus it is recorded in Nehemiah: "They hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, and refused to obey."

Any refusing to comply with our known duty to God, is an hardening of our hearts against him. But besides the commands which God hath given us, he hath also proposed powerful motives to work upon our wills, and to win us to obedience; the opposing the influence of which is a further hardening of our hearts against him.

His threats and his promises were designed to deter us from sin, and to encourage us to obedience, the which if we resist, and obstinately transgress, shews the obduracy of our hearts before God. "They sinned against thy judgments (saith the Prophet), and withdrew their shoulder, and hardened themselves in their wickedness."

But further, God hath not barely given us great motives and encouragements to obedience, and then left us to the weak and impotent power of our depraved nature in the use and improvement of them—no; he hath not. God knows our frame, and remembers that we
are

are but dust; he knows how apt we are in this degenerate state to set our hearts and affections on earthly things, and to forget, or however but seldom to think on, things that are spiritual, and consequently eternal; we have therefore, by Christ, such aid and assistance given us from the good spirit of God, as is a sufficient counterbalance for the depravity of our natures, and the corruption of our hearts, sufficient for our effectual reformation, if we are not wanting to ourselves; and a refusing to comply herewith is the highest opposing of God, and is the last step, and the utmost progress we can make, in hardening of our hearts before him. This (to use the Apostle's word) is a "doing despight to the spirit of grace."

Secondly, As to the evil tendency of this practice. "He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief;" yea, "who hath ever hardened himself against God, and prospered?"

The mischiefs which we may rationally conclude to be the consequences of this sin are many and great; for, from the nature of it, in the first place, it is naturally productive of many evils, yea, and is that alone which easily admits us to every error, which consideration would happily prevent; and then, as to that other acceptation of it in obstinate disobedience, it must be highly provoking to God,
and

and therefore all the judgments and calamities which an incensed Divine Majesty may be provoked to inflict, may be the punishment of this sin, “as it happened upon Pharaoh, and upon
“all his host.”

Who can count the number of afflictions, or their greatness, which here befalls the sons of men on this account, and which may be blindly attributed to natural causes, or (at the most) to less heightened aggravations ; for,

What may not an Almighty God (in judgment remembering justice) do to sinners, who, by their wickedness, obstinately oppose every method of his to reclaim them ?

Every thing that is near and dear to them may be hereby removed, or at least embittered, and, by God’s appointment, they may survive, only to be the objects of his displeasure ; but, what are these ? nay, what is every earthly calamity, when compared to the judgments which God can inflict on the souls of men ?

Even in a temporal way, his judgments are great, how much more then in a spiritual, and in their future consequences hereafter ?

A natural and habitual, yea, and a judicial hardness, will be the consequence of the sin before us, and, “what will the end of these
“things be ?” but “an everlasting destruction
“from

“ from the presence of the Lord, and from the
 “ glory of his power ?” and first,

If we harden our hearts, we shall be naturally
 and habitually hardened.

Habits are the natural effects of acts; so
 that if we harden our hearts, hardness will be
 the fixed habitual temper of our souls.

Yea, and besides this, God is naturally led
 to coincide with our own disposition, and not
 to strive with us for ever, but withdraws his
 grace from those who withdraw themselves from
 him, and provoke him to it.

God never hardens the heart of the good;
 “ but the wicked, and him that delighteth in
 “ sin, doth his soul abhor ;” and it is no won-
 der, that if when sinners depart from his grace,
 God should depart also from them, and leave
 them to pursue their own destruction. If we
 provoke God (by resisting his grace), he will
 yield us to temptation; and what other can we
 then expect, but to be “ led captive by our
 enemy at his will ?

Having thus spoken to the particulars pro-
 posed, much surely need not be added to shew
 how deplorable this state is, and how much it
 concerns us to repent and turn to God, and,
 in time, “ to consider our ways and be wise,”
 “ and not to sin wilfully, lest afterward there
 “ should

“should remain no more satisfaction for sin,
“but fiery indignation to consume us.”

I speak not this to discourage any man from repentance (it being the best thing we can at all times do), but to exhort to it and to amendment; that we should especially resist the beginnings of sin; and that before we proceed upon any action, especially of moment, to consider well with ourselves what the end of it will be.

To conclude: Since the mischief of hardening ourselves (however occasioned) whether through inconsideration, or in the natural effect of it, in disobedience and sin, is so great, and its consequences frequently so fatal, how ought we to guard against all avenues thereto, and to “work out our salvation (thro’ faith) “with fear and trembling.”

Were these things imprinted upon our minds with a lively sense and conviction of the truth of them, to what watchful care and circumspection would they move and excite us? What should we not cheerfully suffer, yea, what should we not deny ourselves, rather than wilfully offend God? it being that whereby we manifest the obduracy of our hearts against him; but

Who is there that is free from every act of wilful and deliberate disobedience to the will of God?

The

The danger in this first step is not great, if we proceed no further, but depart from the evil of our doings, and retract what we have done amiss by a speedy and sincere repentance; and what is there more likely to engage us to this, than is the consideration of the mischiefs that attend our continuance in a course of sin, thereby hardening our hearts before God?

In the serious consideration therefore of these things, let us (as we are divinely counselled)
“ seek the Lord whilst he may be found, and
“ call upon him while he is near, before our
“ feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and
“ the things which belong to our peace be for
“ ever hid from our eyes.”

For “ he that hardeneth his heart shall fall
“ into mischief.”

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

42

IVEN 10 2 1 3 4

It is a great pleasure to me to hear of your success in your studies. I am sure you will continue to improve and will be able to do much good in the world. I am your friend and will be glad to hear from you again.



Run North 1000 feet and around 1000 ft. to

1900-1901

ERRATA in Vol. V.

Page 128 line 3, for *is* read *are*

186 — 33, for *grateful* read *graceful*

197 — 13, for *posseffors* read *professors*

205 — 24, for *interests* read *intents*

227 in the note, for *inascitur* read *innascitur*

244 line 11, for *jekoa* read *tekoa*

257 — 24, for *from* read *from them*

288 — 3, for *and* read *in*

335 — 28, for *life* read *the Son of Man*

